

fullerton

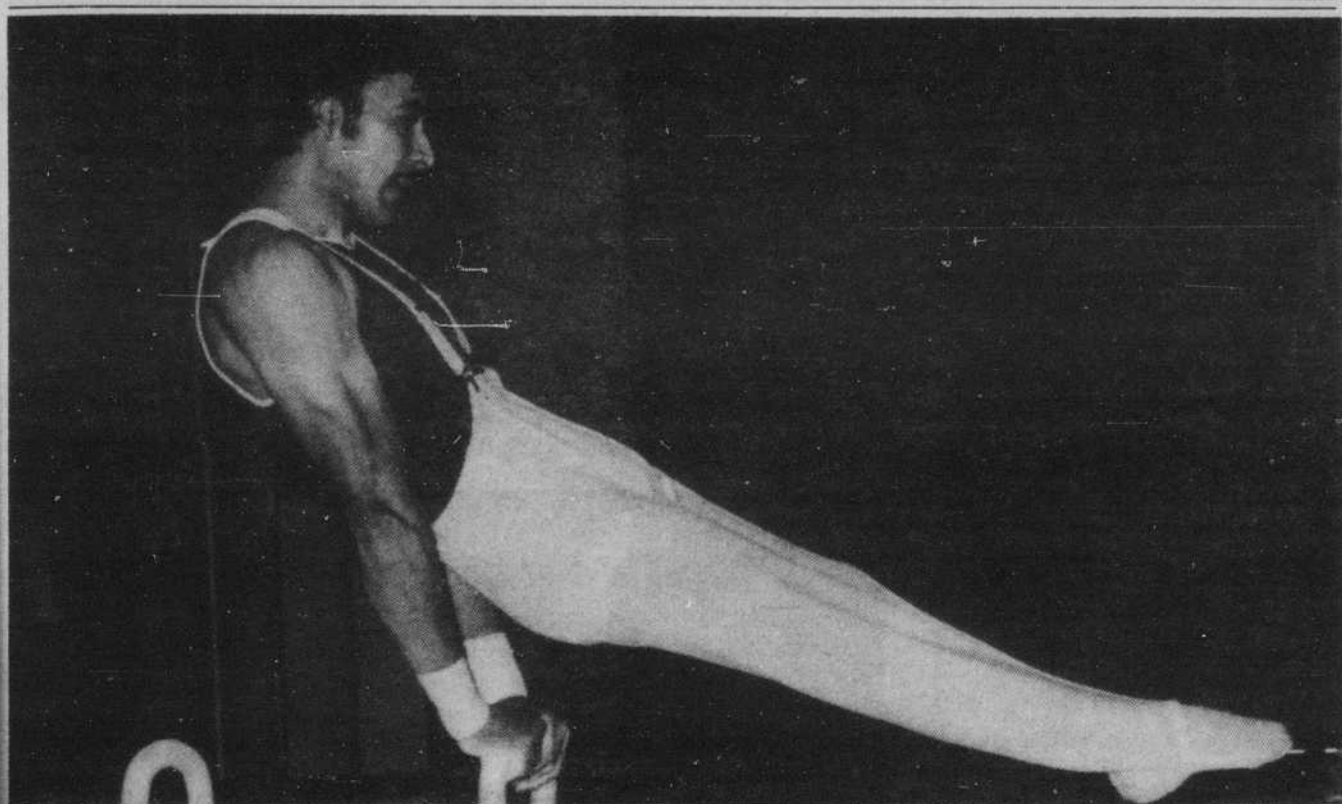


Photo courtesy of John Culwell/Fullerton

Joel Ulloa is a strong contender in the pommel horse event for Cal-Fullerton.

Individuals and attitude the key behind dark horse Fullerton

By MIKE BAER
Of the Emerald

Before the NCAA spotlight shifts back to neighbors USC and UCLA, Cal State-Fullerton sends its gymnastics team to follow the footsteps of its basketball team this weekend at the national championships in Eugene.

The Fullerton campus is still buzzing from the Titans' strong showing in the recent NCAA basketball tournament, and coach Dick Wolfe feels his gymnastics team might be inspired to pull a few upsets of their own.

The attitude of the team, said Wolfe, is reflective of the whole campus community following a campus assembly honoring their astonishing basketball team. Wolfe feels that workouts have been going extremely well and his team is charged up and ready to reach its potential.

Wolfe is looking forward to this weekend, and sees his team as a real factor despite the fact they have the lowest qualifying score of the eight teams competing for the championship.

"My goal is to do the best we've done all year, what happens before the NCAA's doesn't really matter," Wolfe explained.

It's almost a sure bet the coach will get his wish. He feels his team has not yet peaked, and he expects them to really jell this weekend.

The NCAA championships are not new to Wolfe, himself a three time national college division coach of the year. Fullerton's credentials are strong despite only competing in Division I against major universities since 1975.

Prior to that, Fullerton captured three national championships at the college division level.

Besides experience in national competition, Fullerton comes to McArthur Court armed with some very potent individual talent, led by pommel horse specialist Joel Ulloa, currently rated number one in the nation in that event.

Ulloa, with his lifetime best a sizzling 9.8, should provide hometown favorite Tom Truedson strong competition for the individual title. Rated highly by International Gymnastics Magazine and fresh off a first place Western Regional performance, Ulloa is expected to return to his All-American form of 1975, following an off year due to injury.

Two others expected to shine for Fullerton are rings specialist Elliot Shnee, ranked sixth nationally and just two-tenths of a point out of first place, and Donnie Evins, who is a floor exercise standout. Wolfe sees his chances for a title as extremely good.

One of the major disappointments for Wolfe this year is the failure of 1976 NCAA vaulting champion Sam Shaw to qualify for the vaulting finals. Shaw's failure is probably due to him concentrating on his all-around performance while he sat out last year. He will be looked upon this weekend by Wolfe to turn in his top effort to date in the all-around to aid the team total.

Disappointing also is the fact that last year's regional ring champion, Jack Lash, also failed to qualify for the individual competition. Like Shaw, Lash has come on strong as an all-around man, one of seven Fullerton will

bring to Eugene.

Home meets are very exciting so the crowds should not scare Fullerton. What could bother Fullerton is that because of a very limited budget traveling and recruiting are tough. The limited traveling has helped Fullerton train more effectively, but the limited budget makes it tough to compete with the bigger universities in recruiting.

Coach Wolfe was last in Eugene for the championships in 1973 and feels it was the best run of the last ten national meets. He credits Oregon coach Bill Ballester for the good crowds again expected this weekend.

Wolfe and his team are very excited about the opportunity to compete against the best teams in the nation.

"This meet will have class. It's an honor just to be part of it."

Although Fullerton has the lowest qualifying score in the meet, Wolfe feels the Western Regional score was far below what his team is capable of. Except for top all-arounder 6'3" Donnie Evins' injury which will limit him to three events, injuries are at a minimum and not the problem they were earlier in the year.

Other competitors to keep an eye out for are specialists Joe Shnee, who has a lifetime best of 9.6 on the parallel bars and Herb Massinger, a skilled performer on the horizontal bar.

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tal bar specialist Dave Martin. Martin finished ninth in the NCAA finals a year ago and Robinson feels that placing will be improved upon after watching the junior score 18,800 points in the conference meet.

With qualifying seven individuals as well as his entire team, Robinson stated that the biggest key towards success for the Sun Devils would be depth.

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"Sure you want your top people to score high for you," said Robinson. "But at the same time everybody who competes has got to come through for you."

"I'm really hoping for everybody to come through and score well for us. Ideally you would want the top four scores in every event, but I'm just hoping to score a nine from every kid in our events."

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