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An anticlimactic 100th

When the Oregon wrestling team beat California last night it marked coach Ron Finley's 100th college coaching win, all of which have come during Finley's nine year career at Oregon.

Big deal, says Finley. "All it means is that I've been around long enough to win 100 meets. All that counts is winning the conference and national meets. We could have reached 100 a lot sooner than this if we would have scheduled easier teams."

If 100 wins isn't something to get excited about, consider that Finley's current career winning percentage of .64 is the best ever by any Oregon wrestling coach. The Ducks, under the guidance of

Finley, have finished under .500 only twice, Finley's first two years here.

In 1975 Oregon won the Pac-8 championship with a record number of team points and six individual winners. That year the Ducks also finished 12th in the NCAA championships, which is their best performance ever.

In 1976 Oregon lost the Pac-8 title by one quarter point, and in 1977 the Ducks won 18 dual meets, a school record.

Finley, the man, is almost too nice, too honest, too down to earth to be true. But that's just the way he is. While recalling the 1975 Pac-8 heavyweight championship match between the Ducks' Greg Gibson and Oregon State's Larry Bielenberg tears of sensitivity welled in his eyes; and it's a sensitivity Finley openly displays. He's extremely popular with his athletes as well, and this certainly has much to do with his success.

That, and the fact that he's been a winner in wrestling since the day he set foot on the mat for Newberg High School and went on to win the Oregon state 137-pound title two years in a row.

The guy he beat for the state championship his senior year was coached by Bill Martell, who last night was the coach Finley's team defeated for win number 100.

From Newberg, Finley went on to Oregon State where he won the conference title twice and placed second in the NCAA meet.

In 1961 Finley competed for the first time on a United States team, and in 1962 he placed fourth in the World Championships. The following year he was again fourth in the World meet but won the Pan American Games title.

In 1964 he made the U.S. Olympic team and finished fourth in the Greco-Roman competition at the Games. No one from America has ever placed higher than fourth in Greco-Roman competition in the the Olympics and Finley was the first to do it.

In 1966 he placed sixth in Greco-Roman in the World Championships and then retired from competition. "That was the end of my career," he says. "I got married three days later."

Finley was a tough competitor and never missed a match because of an injury. "You've always got jammed fingers and hyperextended elbows, but we call those hangnail injuries," he says. "If you talk about those people laugh at you."

Although Finley doesn't consider a separated sternum a "hangnail" injury, it didn't stop him from competing. The injury occurred on the first day of a tournament in 1966, but he continued the match and then went on to wrestle the next day. "I had to qualify," he



Although he seems unimpressed with the feat, Oregon wrestling coach Ron Finley won his 100th match last night when the Ducks downed California in Berkeley.

remembers. "It was my last chance to make the national team, so I had to go ahead and wrestle."

He placed third, thus making the team.

Following three years of coaching at Reedsport High School Finley moved on to Oregon and replaced Art Keith as the Ducks' coach.

During Finley's tenure at Oregon, 18 Ducks have made national teams, and Joe Sade competed in the 1976 Olympics.

Of all the people Finley has coached at Oregon he considers Gibson the best. The 225-pound heavyweight won the Pac-8 and placed second in the NCAA twice. "The most awesome wrestler we have ever had was Greg Gibson. He was not only an awesome wrestler but he was a darn good football player too."

"When he and Bielenberg wrestled it was without a doubt the most exciting moment I've ever had in collegiate wrestling. There was just awesome, raw power out there. It was two of the best heavyweights you could ever see."

One-on-one rivalries such as the one between Gibson and Bielenberg are the essence of wrestling in Finley's opinion. "Anytime that the fans can see a performance where people compete above their level of performance, well that's just such an exciting event," he says.

This deep down feeling and love of wrestling is what Finley tries to transmit to his team through his position as coach. "If I can pay back just a little bit of all the experiences I have had in wrestling then it's all worth it," he says.

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