

Wrestlers claim Pac-10 title

Nine earn NCAA spots, Stuebing named MVP

By STEVE TURCOTTE
Of the Emerald

CORVALLIS — Nine Duck wrestlers will be going to Princeton, N.J., for the NCAA nationals as Oregon swept through the Pacific-10 championships with 93½ points.

Oregon coach Ron Finley began beaming early in the evening at the Pac-10 wrestling finals Monday night here at Gill Coliseum.

And why not?

With Mike Erb's victory at 118 pounds, the Ducks clinched the Pac-10 crown.

After the first day of wrestling Sunday night, the Ducks had amassed 77½ points while their two rivals, Arizona State and Oregon State, had 59½ and 59 points, respectively.

But Finley refrained from emphasizing the Duck lead.

"We could even lose this tournament," said the Duck mentor Monday afternoon. "We may only even win by five. It could be that close."

But contrary to his comments, Oregon's 10 wrestlers claimed an easy first-place finish to win their second-ever Pac-10 wrestling title.

Oregon's 93½ points overshadowed the rest of the field. OSU took second with 76½ and ASU finished third with 72 points. The bottom three were Arizona with 34 points, Washington State with 26½ and Stanford with eight.

"I really didn't expect us to be out in front as far as we were after Sunday night," Finley said. "We got a lot of points by pins, and with seven guys in the finals, it did not hurt our chances one bit."

Erb opened up the Oregon title hunt with a tough 8-6 decision over Davie Martin of ASU. Erb trailed 6-5 with 28 seconds remaining in the match, but a takedown with four seconds remaining and one point for riding time clinched the match and ensured a Duck victory.

"In the third period, I was trying to turn him and keep the riding time that I had and I accomplished that," said sophomore wrestler Erb.

Oregon's Bill Nugent, at 142, scored the upset of the evening with a 9-7 decision over two-time All-American Mike Bauer

from Oregon State. After a Bauer takedown and only one minute remaining, Nugent turned things around with an escape and a takedown in the waning moments to win.

"The first time I wrestled Bauer, earlier this season, I was scared," said Nugent, a junior. "But this time I was relaxed and was hoping to do a good job, and I did that. He goes after you really hard, but this time I was ready for him."

But at 158 pounds, it appeared that Oregon's Rick O'Shea was not ready for the Beavers' John Ohly as he dropped an 11-5 decision.

Oregon got back on the winning track at 167 pounds as Jeff Stuebing recorded the quickest pin of the tournament (33 seconds) over John Bliss of WSU.

"He's tough, but not too tough on his back," said Stuebing, who was named the tournament's most valuable wrestler. "Last time I wrestled him, I let up in the third round.

"Before the match tonight, I told myself not to let up in the third round — but it didn't get that far," Stuebing said.

At 190, Ryan Kelly decided Dan Morrow of WSU 10-5 to win his first Pac-10 crown. After a Morrow escape with 1:40 remaining, the match was tied 4-4. But a Kelly takedown and nearfall gave the Oregon senior the victory in the closing moments.

"Morrow beat me last year in the Pac-10's," said Kelly. "I felt I wrestled his way for the first two rounds and he was really wearing me down. But I finally picked things up in the third round and won."

In consolation action, 126-pounder Miles Hancock pinned Lloyd Melone of WSU in 3:01 to capture third place, but failed to make the national squad as the Pac-10 coaches voted to send Oregon's Barry Boyles (150) and teammate Mike Miller (177).

Boyles was defeated by ASU's Jackson Kister 10-3 in the tough 150 bracket to finish fourth. Miller also finished fourth after losing to Doug Perkins of Stanford, 11-3.

The top two wrestlers in each

of the 10 weight classes and 10 coaches' selections will travel to nationals.

"I don't think we really felt the pressure at all," said Finley. "The entire team was pretty much relaxed heading into the tournament."

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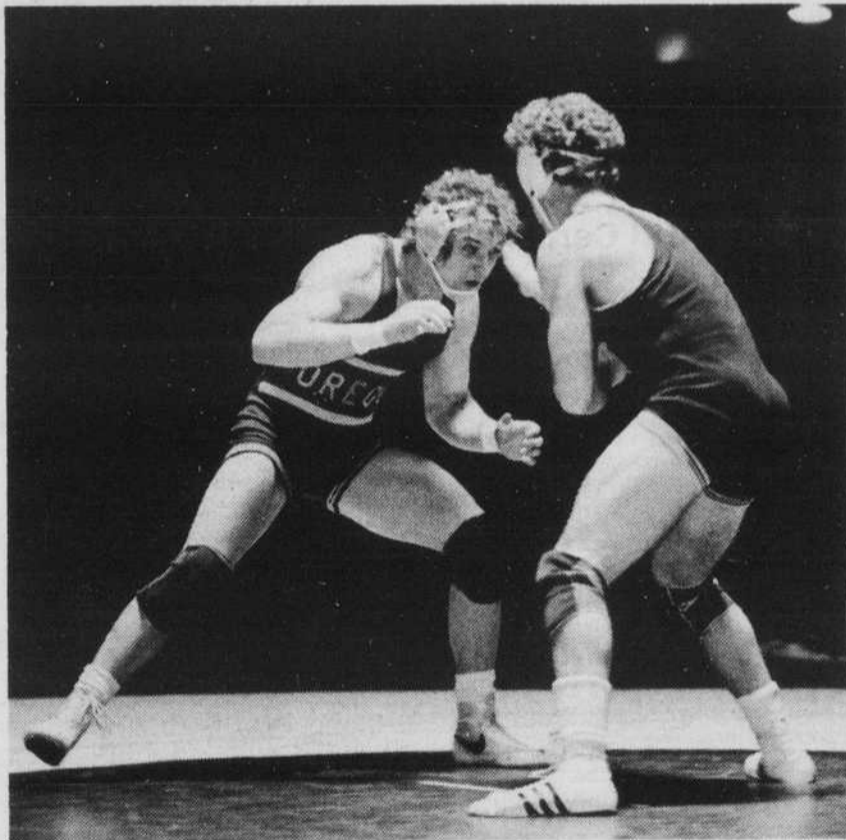


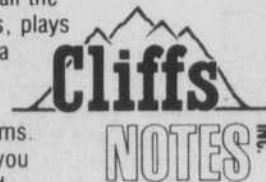
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Jeff Stuebing, named the Pac-10's most valuable wrestler, recorded the quickest pin of the tournament.

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