

Transfer leads water polo club

By Steve Friedman
Of the Emerald

Rob Romancier needed something more demanding.

After several years of competitive swimming, he was becoming disinterested with the sport. It was monotonous at best.

As a freshman entering Southern Oregon State College three years ago, he knew a

change was in order. That change came in the form of water polo.

"I was tired of looking at the bottom of the pool," he says. "I am a very water-oriented person so I decided to take up polo. It was something new and challenging."

Romancier spent his first year on the bench but says he "improved by watching the team and asking players questions." He did get some playing time but only "when we were so far ahead we couldn't lose."

In his second year he was put into a more active role. But he thought he was missing something going to a small school.

"I wanted to go to a bigger school," he says. "SOC's athletic budget was getting cut and the programs were suffering."

As a physical education major, Romancier came to Oregon specifically interested in his education. However, he realized later that he would need an outlet from school. That's when he contacted water polo coach Tracy Rockwell.

"Tracy was very friendly and said I would have a place on the team," Romancier says. "So I decided to play."

"I really hadn't seen him play that much," says Rockwell. "But our team was just starting to come back to life and we needed all the experienced players we could get."

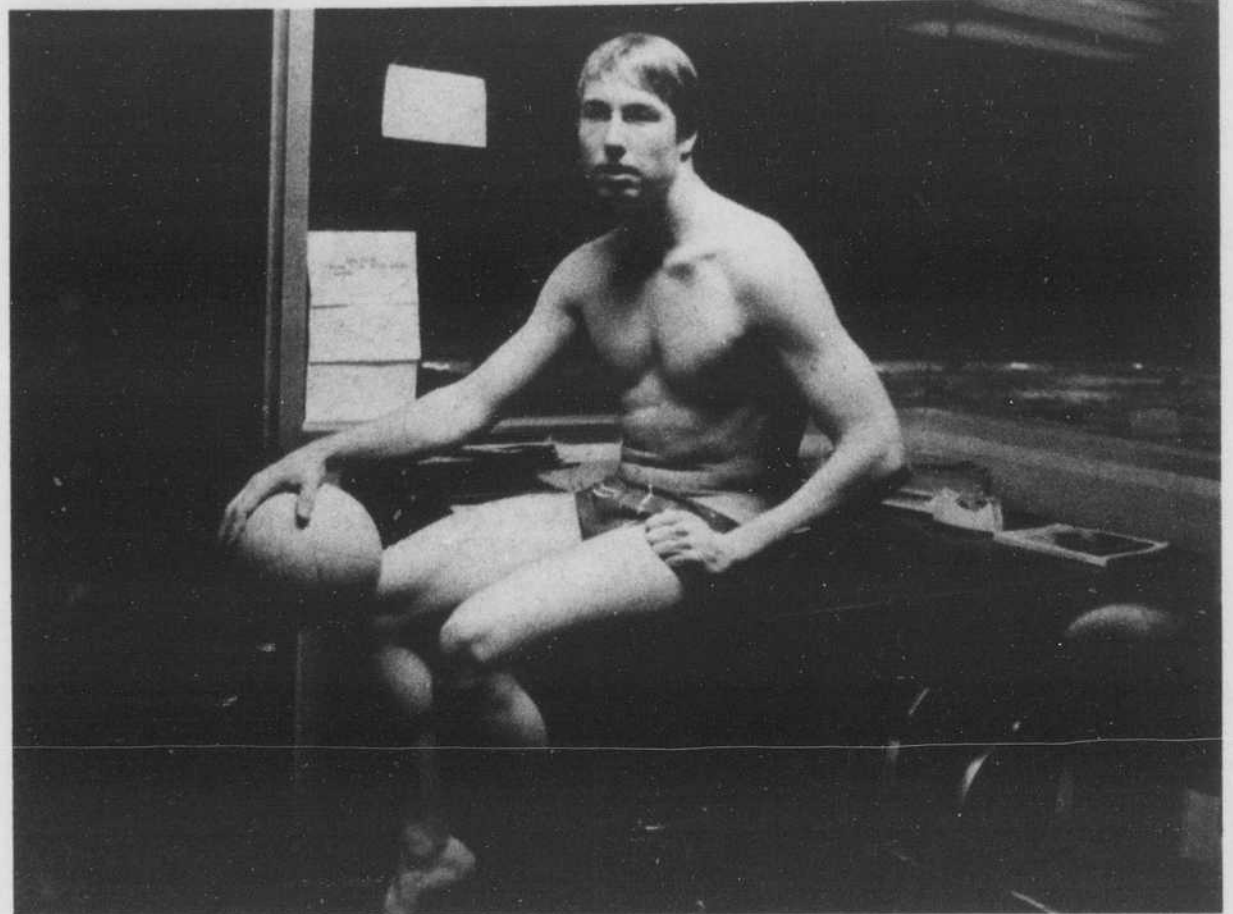
What Rockwell didn't expect was a scoring leader and top assist man.

"He's improved out of sight," the coach says of Romancier. "He is our leading goal scorer (27) and a top assist man (19). He's one of my best players."

Rockwell says Romancier's unexpected improvement has come from his attitude. "He concentrates a lot more than others and really applies himself," says Rockwell. "He has a great attitude for the game."

This burst of ability has thrust him into the role of team leader on the young squad. Romancier considers the role a privilege.

"I like the idea of helping my teammates," he says. "I try to



Rob Romancier

Photo by Bob Baker

get them to listen and work hard. I also get on them when they goof off."

The team's record of 9-3 reflects the positive influence of Romancier, but he insists that they need to work hard everyday.

"We have a lot of talented players on this team, but in practice we need to concentrate harder and work on our offensive movement," he says.

Rockwell agrees and stresses the importance of not making the little mistakes. "We are capable of playing very good polo," he says. "But we have to

stop making the dumb fouls and turnovers. We have to buckle down and use our tactics."

Oregon's only defeats have come at the hands of Oregon State. The first two were very close but the third was a blowout. Still, Romancier thinks one more shot at Oregon State could produce a win for the Ducks.

Oregon will get its chance this weekend when they travel to Corvallis for the Northwest Championships, where the Ducks are seeded number two behind the Beavers.

"They have beaten us three times but we made some critical errors in those games. Most of

them mental mistakes. If we play the polo we can play against them this weekend, they'll be looking at a different team then they have seen previously," Romancier says.

Rockwell, too, expects a strong showing from his club after a good week of practice. "We have a strong defense so we have been working on picks and shot selection this week," he says. "If we put them to use, we'll do well."

With OSU number one and holding the key to Oregon's hopes of winning the championships, Romancier has only one thought: "I want those Beavers!"

Doubt about Leonard quitting

BALTIMORE (AP) — Sugar Ray Leonard says his retirement from boxing as welterweight champion is permanent, but fellow fighters aren't so sure.

"Let's give him six months to a year and then we'll know," said middleweight champion Marvin Hagler, one of many boxing greats who attended a gala affair Tuesday night when Leonard announced he was saying goodbye to the ring.

And former heavyweight champion Ken Norton said Wednesday he thought Leonard, like other champions from Joe Louis to Muhammad Ali, would fight again.

Leonard cooled speculation that he would use the extravaganza to announce a multimillion-dollar match with Hagler by saying: "I will not come back. That's it. Boxing is history."

Leonard, who has not fought since undergoing surgery last spring to repair a detached retina — an injury from which his doctor said he had recovered enough to fight again.

He acknowledged that a fight with Hagler "would be Fort Knox" — worth an estimated \$20 million to Leonard and \$12 million to Hagler.

"Unfortunately, it will never happen," he said, bringing groans from a crowd of about 9,000 who paid up to \$100 for ringside seats to hear his announcement.

"The feeling is gone," Leonard confessed, saying he changed his mind about retiring many times and claiming he didn't make his final decision until Tuesday night.

But on Wednesday Leonard's picture appeared on the cover of Sports Illustrated magazine, accompanied by a headline reading "Hanging 'Em Up" and a story in which he said:

"By the time you read this, I will have made

my announcement official, and I hope it ends forever all speculation that I will come back to fight Marvin Hagler or anyone else."

With the welterweight title now vacant, top-ranked contenders Milton McCrory and Donald Curry likely will fight for the championship.

McCrory of Detroit is listed by both the World Boxing Council and the World Boxing Association as the No. 1 contender. Curry of Fort Worth, Texas, is ranked second by the WBC and WBA.

Ed Hrica, a promoter of nine Leonard fights, said he thought the champion's retirement would be temporary unless "his movie and television career takes off like his boxing."

"I think he'll fight again, when he gets the itch again," speculated city official Lou Grasmick, who said Leonard agreed that his next fight, if there is one, would be in Baltimore where he launched a pro career that earned him \$40 million and two titles.

Grasmick, who organized Tuesday's affair, called "An Evening with Sugar Ray Leonard," recalled the fighter's indecision following his gold medal performance in the 1976 Olympics. At the time, Leonard said: "My journey has ended. My mission is complete."

Leonard talked of earning a college degree, but entered the ring instead in February 1977. "I shook hands with him five years ago," Grasmick said, recalling Leonard's agreement to fight in Baltimore, if anywhere.

Leonard's manager, Angelo Dundee, claims, "I have no doubt he'll stick to his decision." And his lawyer, Mike Trainer, says, "Everything has to come to an end."

But a patient Hagler insisted, "My day will eventually come."

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