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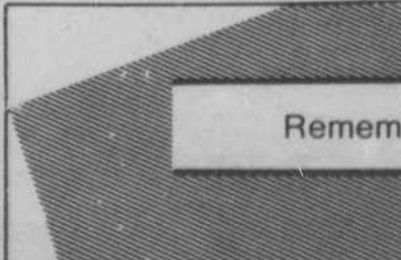
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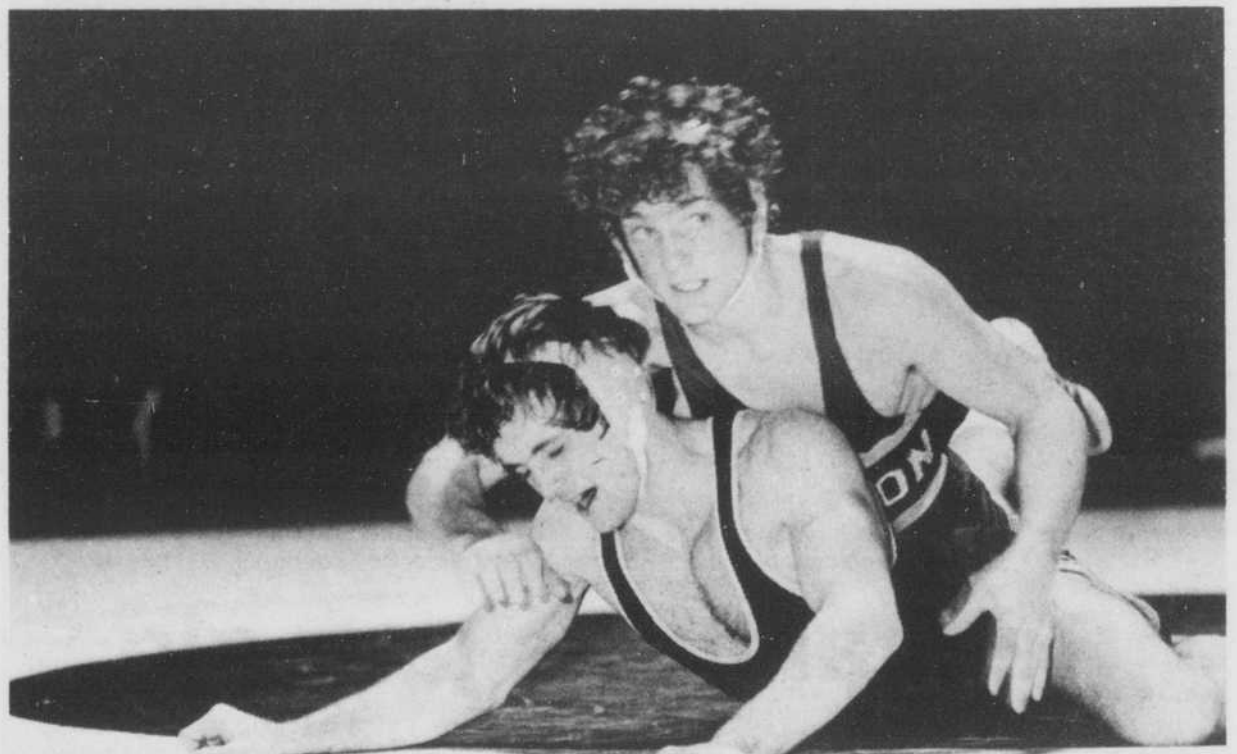
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Sports



Mike Erb in control on and off the mat. The 118-pounder is starting his senior season with the Ducks. Emerald photo

Erb wants to end up on top

By Steve Turcotte
Of the Emerald

Mike Erb has seen it all. Erb, a 118-pounder on the Oregon wrestling team, has undergone both the good and the bad with the Ducks.

The good started in high school when Erb picked up a fourth and a third place finish in the California state high school meet his junior and senior year at Monta Vista High School in Cupertino.

His high placing at the state meet eventually led to a scholarship at Oregon and a spot on the Duck wrestling squad.

"I was recruited by other schools like Louisiana State and UCLA but I liked Oregon the best," says Erb. "I wanted to get away from home and some of those schools weren't very far away. Eugene was really nice and I thought it would be a good place to go to school."

But when he made his entrance to Oregon, the bad began to mix in with the good.

During his freshman year, Erb had to make an adjustment to a different weight class — 126 pounds, a step up from his customary 118. Duck coach Ron Finley already had a quality 118-pounder in Adam Cuestas (now wrestling at Cal State-Bakersfield) and decided that moving Erb to another weight class would be beneficial to both Erb and the team.

"Since I was the biggest 118-pounder there was it was natural to move me up a weight class," says Erb. "I got a lot of experience that first year, but I also got beat up a lot."

Erb finished his rookie season with a 13-18 slate, which is not bad for a freshman in a foreign weight class.

Erb's sophomore year was a lesson in learning. Cuestas left school, and the door was wide open for Erb at 118 pounds. But his dreams of starting at 118 pounds were put to rest when he

injured his shoulder. Erb was put on the shelf that year as a redshirt.

"It was a good move," admits Erb. "We had another 118-pounder in Alan Goldman. I kind of grew up a lot that year."

It was also during that time that Erb met his future wife, Kay, whom he married in October of 1980. Erb attributes his maturity on the mat and off to his marriage.

"I really feel that it settled me down," Erb says. "Kay has helped me a lot with support. She has really been a lot of help."

Finley agrees. "Getting married has really provided a lot of stability in Mike's life," Finley says. "It has been good for him."

With a settled down attitude, Erb had an outstanding sophomore year. He won the Pac-10 crown at 118 pounds and advanced to the NCAA meet in Princeton, N.J.


"I was in awe of all the guys back there," says Erb. "It was amazing how big and how good everyone was back there."

Last year, Erb's season was marked by another shoulder injury which kept him out of the Ducks' lineup from Christmas until the Pac-10 championships in March. But he successfully defended his championship to once again advance to the national meet.

"I was scared about my shoulder at the Pac-10 meet, but it felt pretty good when I started wrestling," says Erb, who has posted a 41-30 record in three years at Oregon. "At nationals I won my first match but lost my next one. It was still good experience, though."

Finley has had nothing but good times with Erb.

"Mike is great to work with," says Finley. "He is dependable and a steady performer on the mats. He has had a tendency to get hurt but always seems to be ready to go when the big tournaments come around."



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