

Wrestlers hope talent masks inexperience

By Terry Rhoads
Of the Emerald

These are difficult times for a young and inexperienced Oregon wrestling team.

Two years ago, the Ducks plucked the second of consecutive Pac-10 conference championships. This year's Oregon squad will be hard-pressed to mount a challenge for top three honors at the conference championships.

What happened to a wrestling program that was making a strong bid to put a permanent hold on the league trophy just two years ago?

"What we're seeing is the result of the John Caine (former Oregon athletic director) era, where they cut all our recruiting for two years," says Oregon coach Ron Finley. "During that time period (1980-81), Rick O'Shea was the only recruit that we really brought in and we're going to redshirt him this season."

"It leaves us with very little experience."

A quick look at the Oregon roster mirrors Finley's concern.

The Ducks will tackle their remaining 20-meet schedule with a talented but inexperienced freshmen-sophomore dominated lineup.

Of the 27 athletes listed on this year's Oregon roster, 12 are freshmen, 10 are sophomores and

Grapplers grab 34th at Caesars Palace tourney

The Oregon wrestling team finished 34th out of 41 teams in the Caesars Palace Invitational last weekend in Las Vegas, Nev.

Oklahoma State University, last year's NCAA runner-up, won the meet, which featured some of college wrestling's finest powers.

Lorenzo West at 142 pounds and Dan Martin at 158 won their opening matches, but were knocked out in the next rounds.

Garret Clayton (118), Daemon Knight (167), and Martin advanced to the fourth round before being eliminated.

The Ducks were hampered by injuries before the invitational as three starters — Sean Braddock, Lance Hohanadel, and Rafe Mumford — didn't make the trip.

Huskers' Rozier runs to Heisman

NEW YORK (AP) — University of Nebraska running back Mike Rozier, only the second back in NCAA history to rush for more than 2,000 yards in a single season, won the Heisman Trophy Saturday night.

Rozier, who rushed for 2,148 yards this year, became the 12th straight running back and 33rd overall to win the prestigious trophy.



Ron Finley

only one a senior.

But Finley, who will coach the U.S. Greco-Roman wrestling team in the 1984 Olympics at Los Angeles, isn't fretting over the situation.

To rebuild his program, Finley has recruited a horde of talent, including a couple of high school all-Americans.

"As far as the talent coming in, I

think we've got more this year than we've ever had," he says. "Without any question, I think it's the best recruiting class we've ever had."

Four freshmen in particular grab Finley's attention. Possibly the best newcomer is 142-pounder Sean Braddock. The Oregon Class AAA prep champion from Springfield High School is considered one of the nation's top recruits.

"He's a heck of a worker in the wrestling room, he really wants to become good," says Finley of his prize catch, who has been sidelined much of this season with injuries.

Another top freshman who has spent the early part of this season out of commission is 118-pound Larry Toplioff. The former Sandy High School standout represents great potential in Finley's view — he ripped through 80 straight opponents last season on the way to an Oregon Class AAA prep state title among other honors.

The other two freshmen who make Oregon's future appear brighter are 167-pound Daemon Knight and 177-pound Brad

Steward. Knight has been impressive so far this season with a 6-4 record. Included was a 14-7 win against Portland State which keyed the Ducks' 19-18 season-opening dual-meet victory over the Vikings.

Steward, who won consecutive Alaska state titles as a prep, jumped out to a 6-0 mark this

'What we're seeing is the result of the John Caine era'

— Ron Finley

season before finally losing at the Caesars Palace Invitational this past weekend where the Ducks finished 34th in a 40-team field.

Other key Duck starters include junior Lorenzo West (142), senior Rafe Mumford (150), and sophomore Brett Hamilton (190-heavyweight).

Finley says the Ducks will spend this season educating themselves for the future. Oregon has test dates against such opponents as

Pac-10 powers Oregon State and Arizona State.

Nonetheless, Finley, in his 14th season as the Ducks' mentor, sees a bright side — the future.

"We're not starting over," says the Oregon coach, who went to Europe because of Greco-Roman coaching duties and will return in mid-December, "but it's going to take us one more year before we have the depth we need to fill all the weights."

In the meantime, Finley will educate his young team while waiting for more numbers.

Does Finley worry about sending his top freshmen up against some of the nation's best wrestlers?

"It does bother me to put a freshman in over his head, and that's going to happen in some cases. I'm hoping, though, that all of this will pay off."

The Ducks' remaining schedule includes eight more home meets, including their own big meet, the Oregon Invitational on Dec. 18 with Oregon State, Division II champion Cal State-Bakersfield and Portland State.

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