

# Wrestlers regroup with skill, spirit

By Tim Davis  
Of the Emerald

In January, the University was stunned when a van transporting the wrestling team to a meet against Washington State University crashed in southeastern Washington, killing squad members Jed Kesey and Lorenzo West and leaving several others seriously injured. The team limped through the remainder of its 1983-84 schedule emotionally shaken and understaffed.

And now another setback has struck once again with the Duck's 1984-85 season opener only two days away. Of the ten athletes and coaches involved in Monday's sniper incident, five were Duck wrestling team members and one was assistant coach John Kotmel.

According to head coach Ron Finley, 1983 Pac-10 champion Rick O'Shea, who carries the Duck's strength in the 158 pound class, received shrapnel wounds to the neck, buttocks and calf and will probably be out of competition for at least one month.

Wrestlers Keith Beutler, Bill Beutler, Glenn Jarrett and Derek Phillips along with coach Kotmel and O'Shea were trapped in the weight room of Autzen Stadium for over three hours while a gunman released an estimated seventy high-powered rifle rounds onto and around the stadium grounds killing a runner on Pre's Trail behind Autzen, injuring O'Shea and then killing himself with a bullet to the head.

Finley, who was recently named national wrestling "Coach of the Year" for his involvement with the U.S. Olympic Greco-Roman wrestling team, is striving to put the team's growing list of tragedies into the past and not let them overshadow the Duck's potential this year. However, Finley did say that this new setback is going to hurt them, but he feels that with a lot of scrambling and team effort they will be able to pull themselves together and become strong competitors during the 1984-85 season.

Fortunately, this year's team roster got a boost from an unexpectedly large turnout of wrestlers — 49 — for the squad's first practice one month ago.

"People knew we had a lot of holes on our team," Finley explains. "It's by far the biggest walk-on group that I've ever had since I've coached here. I'm really pleased. We definitely needed it."

Because of the influx of new wrestlers, this year's squad is young and inexperienced. The team is going to need some time to develop, Finley cautions.

"We're young and we'll show some signs of immaturity at the first of the season. Dual-meet wise we're going to have to real-

ly scramble. But I feel we're going to be fairly tough by the end of the season."

Finley points to a tough schedule as the only way for his young squad to get the needed experience. "We have a long schedule but we need it," he says. "These young guys have got to get the experience."

"Hopefully they're going to be veterans by the time the season is over."

The Ducks have already had one meet, a pre-season exhibition against a touring Japanese national team. Though the over-matched Ducks lost to the Japanese, the meet gave Finley an early look at his team.

"It gave me some ideas about how our young guys compete. I liked what I saw," Finley says.

Much of the youth and inexperience of the team is concentrated in the lower five weight divisions.

Two freshmen, Joe Little and Roberto Pelayo, are emerging as the key competitors in the 118-pound class.

At 126 pounds, rookie Jarrett looks to be the top wrestler there. Finley was especially impressed with Jarrett's performance against the Japanese.

"He did a great job of competing out there even though he got beat," says Finley.

Up for grabs will be the 134-pound division with Tim Curtiss, Greg Kimura, Steve Newton, and Wayne Skill all fighting for the lone spot. The 142-pound class appeared to belong to Sean Braddock, but a recurring back injury has caused some doubt as to his status.

"Without Sean, that's going to be a wide open weight," Finley says. "I'm not sure who our top people are going to be there."

Both Bill Beutler and Derek Phillips look to be contenders for the 150 pound class, but most of the team's strength and experience lies within the five upper-weight divisions. Although the 158 pound class has been set back by O'Shea's injury, Finley is looking to Keith Beutler, a senior and last year's team MVP, for strength at 167 pounds.

"(Beutler) could win the Pac-10 this year and possibly place in the NCAA tournament," says Finley.

One of the tougher and deeper weight divisions will be the 177-pound class. 1983-84 starter James Terry, transfer two-time NCAA placer Michael Harter, and David Thomason, all have legitimate shots. At 190 pounds, Brad Steward and Cal Thomason will battle it out.

Senior Lance Hochanadel, 1982 Pac-10 runner-up, will represent the Ducks in the heavyweight division. "I think he can win the Pac-10 and he can place highly in the NCAA if he wrestles tough and stays healthy," says Finley.



The young Duck wrestlers are undergoing vigorous training in preparation for the 1984-85 season opener Friday.

The Ducks should be in the thick of the Pac-10 team title race despite its inexperience. Finley points to Arizona State and Oregon State as the two top teams. The Ducks and Washington State should fight it out to see who the "next toughest one is."

The wrestlers themselves share Finley's determination to make a show of it in the conference race.

"We're going to make some noise in the Pac-10 and surprise a lot of people," says Hochanadel.

With the Friday season opener against Humboldt State and Chico State at Arcata, Calif. only a short time away, Finley's assessment of the team's progress is good considering all the setbacks.

"I'm really pleased with the way practices are going."

Thanks in part to his experiences as Greco-Roman coach at the Summer Olympics, Finley has added some new twists to the squad's fitness program. In addition to an increased and more team-oriented weight lifting program, the wrestlers are also participating in bi-weekly sessions of aerobics.

"It just adds a little, takes away from the staleness of practices. I think it helps," says Finley.

The success of the U.S. Olympic wrestlers at Los Angeles — 13 medals including nine gold — has generated a lot of enthusiasm for the sport throughout the country. Finley and Hochanadel point to this fall's unusually large turnout of wrestlers as an example.

"I think the Olympics has had an effect," Hochanadel says. "Finley is really fired up about it. I think it trickles down

to everybody."

Most of all, though, Finley hopes that the fans have gotten caught up in the post-Olympic excitement.

"I'm hoping it's going to help our turnout," Finley says. "We definitely need lots of fans. Probably the biggest disappointment I've had since I've been

here at the University is the lack of fans from the community and the students."

"One of the big things that made our success at the Olympics so good was the fans," explains Finley. "When the fans are in the crowd yelling, it makes a tremendous difference.



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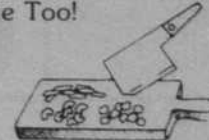
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