

Lewis matures on the mat, leads Duck wrestlers

By Ron Gullberg
Of the Emerald

Most athletes aspire, but never achieve greatness in their certain athletic field. Oregon wrestler Shon Lewis has risen to the top in a sport to which he's relatively new.

Lewis, currently 23-3-2 overall and 15-2-2 in duals, is ranked tenth in the nation (which is expected to go up this week) in the 126-pound weight class. He leads the Ducks into a 7:30 p.m. confrontation with Pacific University tonight at MacArthur Court.

Lewis' only losses this season were to top-ten ranked wrestlers.

"I was totally into basketball my freshman season and was a starter on the JV basketball team at my high school (Albany High School in Sacramento, Calif.) when a friend of mine, who was a 106-pounder for the wrestling team, and I were wrestling on the grass," Lewis said. "The wrestling coach saw us, and I was handling my friend pretty well. The coach called me over and said I had pretty good technique."

The coach made him a deal: "Join the wrestling team and I'll take you to Hawaii with us for the United States National High School Championships."

"That sounded great to me," said Lewis, who ended up taking third at the prestigious meet that forever changed his athletic career.

Besides being a prep basketball standout, Lewis was a football and baseball star, leading the league three consecutive seasons in rushing and was a

two-time San Joaquin-section football champion.

When it came time to choose a college, Lewis' mother convinced her well-sought-after son to consider academics and the University of Oregon.

"I like it here (U of O)," said Lewis. "There's some pretty good fishing holes and beautiful landscape. I like to be alone or with one-to-two friends just shootin' the breeze and casting our lines — I'm not big on the crowd scene."

What Lewis is big on is wins. But last season his record was a sound, but modest 17-11 overall, and 5-6 in duals. He was struggling with dreams and reality and his decision about deciding to come to Oregon.

Now Lewis is a team player and his options are being narrowed to wrestling since his once unimaginable wrestling skills have improved almost overnight.

Lewis, the former prep-football star, was unable to join the Oregon football team for two seasons because his wrestling scholarship is from a minor sport, not a major one like football. And, even though next season he will be eligible to compete, his sudden success on the mat may halt his gridiron dreams.

"Shon is an outstanding football player, but his wrestling skills are getting so good he's going to have to start thinking about staying with wrestling," said Oregon head wrestling coach Ron Finley. "If he plays football he'll have to put on a lot of weight, and he won't be able

to get it off for wrestling." Finley says Lewis has endless potential.

"Shon came to Oregon without much experience — only two high school seasons — and his attitude has changed 100 percent from last season when he was a freshman."

"Last year he pretty much won for himself. This year he wrestles for the team, tries to get big team points, changes weights when we need him to and he helps fire up the team."

Obviously, Lewis' success has made him a team role model — something he says he now takes seriously, but in perspective.

"Chuck (Kearney, the Duck's other nationally-ranked wrestler) and I are like the Bartles and Jaymes' guys," said Lewis. "Chuck is the one who talks and stands in the forefront — he's the technician. The guys watch me in the background to see what I'm doing. I'm a silent leader."

Lewis always has had goals of being number one in his sport, but now he feels they are closer and more realistic than when he was the highly-recruited prep star with lofty expectations.

"My mother told me, when I left for Oregon, that the grass is always greener on the other side," said the now more stable Lewis. "It's worked to my advantage to wrestle here."

"The great thing about wrestling is that it teaches you to fight your problems. When a guy shoots in on your leg you can't give up, you'll let yourself and your team down — you have to fight it. That builds

character and pride — a lot like life does," added Lewis.

Finley has witnessed Lewis' tremendous maturation in just one short year.

"Last year as a freshman Shon struggled in the classroom, too. But wrestling is a discipline sport and to be good you have to have that self discipline. That has carried Shon on the mat and in the classroom this year."

"I'm thinking he'll make na-

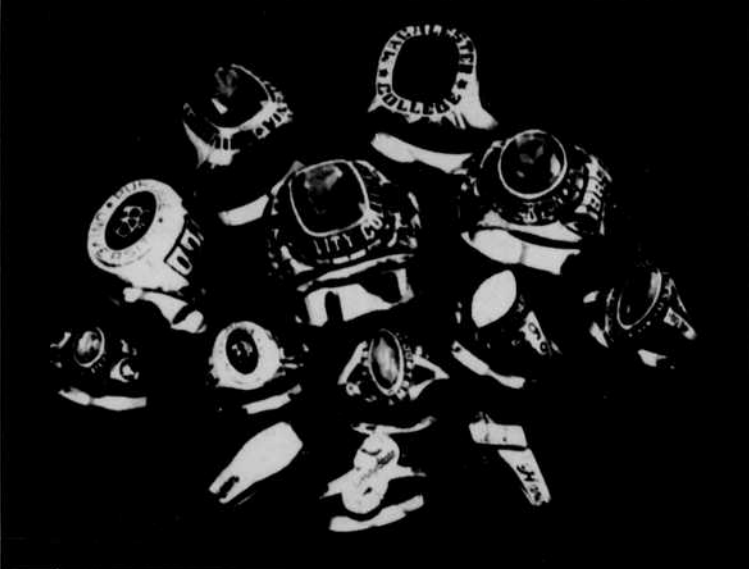
tionals and could possibly place if he continues to work hard at it."

Lewis, who has gained maturity but has not lost his confidence, is convinced that he can win the Pac-10 meet and expects to place in the top five at nationals. "Then I'll compete for a spot on the U.S. national team and travel with them this summer — freestyle wrestling is what I do best."

HALLEY'S COMET
ALLANN BROS. COFFEE
40¢ (8oz.) 50¢ (12oz.)
FREE Half & Half
Across from the UO Bookstore

We have 1987 Miyata
Bicycles In Stock
Call About Our
Pre-Season Special
Paul's Bicycle Shop
342-6155 • 2480 Alder

UO Bookstore



Multiple Choice.
A memorable college experience.
JOSTENS

\$25 OFF
Any Jostens College Ring
with a Grad Gram Coupon.
One coupon per order. Redeemable through your college bookstore or your Jostens representative

See our complete ring selection on display in your college bookstore or meet with your Jostens representative for ordering information.

U of O Bookstore
Wed., Thurs., Fri., Feb. 11, 12, 13
9 a.m.-4 p.m. \$30 Deposit Required.

UO BOOKSTORE 13th & Kincaid
M-F 7:30-5:30
SAT 10:00-4:00
686-4331

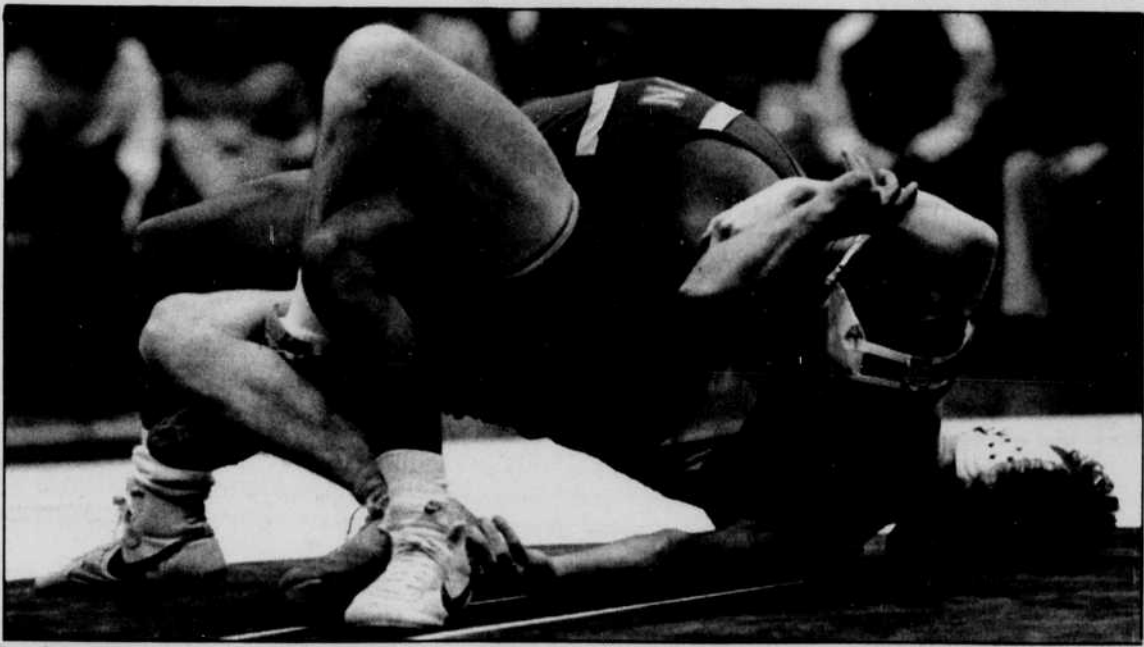


Photo by Maria Corvallis

Things are looking up for Oregon wrestler Shon Lewis. Lewis has accumulated a 23-3-2 overall record this season and is currently ranked tenth in the nation.

VOLVO Owners
Take advantage of our FREE Safety Inspection and SPECIAL

Alpine Import Service
10.50 Oil Change includes oil & filter

Call for an appointment or just drop by
Springfield • 12th & Main • 726-1808
ALL WORK GUARANTEED

The VOLVO Specialist

HIGH QUALITY NISSAN REPAIR IS OUR SPECIALTY.

ASE CERTIFIED

- Lowest labor rates in the area.
- Hassle-free insurance repair work.
- Free estimates.

DUNHAM'S BODY & PAINT SHOP
VALLEY RIVER • 345-1511
OPEN 7:30 am - 8:30 pm MON. - FRI.

One year written guarantee