



Junior Dan Vidlak (left) will be looking to become Oregon's first three-time all-American in more than 20 years this season.

Oregon wrestling team gets richer with recruits

By Mike Maloney
Emerald Contributor

With all due respect to the 1990 Homecoming theme of "Everybody Duck," the Oregon wrestling team may be better represented by a different phrase:

"To the victor goes the spoils."

After registering the best dual meet mark in school history (12-1) last year, the Ducks were able to sign a recruiting class that includes four high school all-Americans who boast 16 state titles among themselves.

That abundance of talent prompted the *Amateur Wrestling News* to tab the Oregon recruiting class as the fourth-best in the nation.

"We had the best year we've ever had as far as getting nationally ranked recruits," said Coach Ron Finley, now in his 21st year. "We've gotten our program to the point where top kids want to come to Oregon."

The Oregon recruiting cause was also aided by an increase in the number of wrestling scholarships from eight to 11.

Whether or not the newcomers can adequately fill the holes in the Duck lineup will determine how strong of a dual meet team Oregon will be this year.

However, the nucleus of veterans who combined for seven previous NCAA tournament appearances should be able to generate the points needed for a top two Pacific-10 Conference finish and a top 20 performance at the NCAA championships in Iowa City in March.

Oregon's best wrestler is 118-pound junior Dan Vidlak.

Vidlak, a two-time all-American, registered a 28-9-0 mark last season en route to an eighth-place finish in the NCAA tournament. If he can repeat that performance this year he will become Oregon's first three-time all-American in more than 20 years.

Once again, senior Rob Stone and sophomore Jason Jones will provide the most excitement in the practice room. Stone and Jones battled throughout the 1989-90 campaign for the starting 126-pound spot and will continue their head-to-head competition in the 134-pound class this season.

The strongest of the Ducks' middle weights is at 142 pounds, where senior Scott Glenn resides. Glenn, who transferred from powerhouse Iowa two years ago, earned a 13-7-1 record and his second consecutive NCAA tournament

appearance last year.

The most highly contested weight class could be 150 pounds this season, where one of three wrestlers could get the nod.

The most experienced of this group is sophomore Pat Craig, who posted an 11-15-1 record last year while wrestling in a variety of weight classes ranging from 134-150 pounds. A pair of three-time high school state champions, Cory Sonnen from Woodburn High School and Jason Muggy from Washington's Ferndale High School, will fight Craig for the position.

The "make or break" area for the Ducks this year could be at the 158 and 167-pound weight classes where former NCAA qualifiers George Johnston and Eric Messner were lost to graduation.

Expected to fill the 158-pound spot was high school all-American Mat Sprague.

Sprague, chosen as the outstanding wrestler at the prep nationals last summer and tabbed as the top 158-pound recruit in the nation, is currently sidelined with a knee injury.

Sophomore Trevor Skarda, who had a 2-8-0 mark in limited action last year, will hold the spot until Sprague's return.

Former Montana prep champion David Windauer and sophomore transfer Solomon Fulp will vie for the start at the 167-pound weight class where Messner gave the Ducks a Pac-10 title in 1989.

The final question mark in the Oregon lineup is at 177 pounds, where freshmen Jeff McCoy and Scott Buzzard have been challenging, but Buzzard has been hampered by injuries.

Senior brothers Curt (190 pounds) and Cam (heavyweight) Strahm, who combined for 41 wins last year, give Oregon a solid 1-2 punch in the bigger weight classes.

Curt Strahm, who posted a 23-10-1 record and earned a second trip to the NCAA tournament while wrestling at 177 pounds last season, made the jump to the 190-pound class for this year's campaign.

Meanwhile, Cam Strahm returns at heavyweight where he qualified for the NCAAs following a 18-11-0 season mark.

The Ducks will be put to the test this season with a schedule that includes non-conference road matches against Bloomsburg State, Purdue and Notre Dame while affording Oregon only four home matches.

Oregon opens the season Friday at Portland State.

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PAC-10 PIGSKIN PROGNOSTICATIONS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Predictions are based on anticipated point spread as determined by individual voters. A correct response is credited each time the favored team wins by at least the predicted margin. The numbers following each person's name represent that individual's overall record. These predictions are intended for entertainment purposes only.

	UO at Cal	USC at OSU	UCLA at UW	ASU at WSU	Stan at UA	N. Dame at Tenn
A. Conklin (24-17)	UO +4	USC +8	UW +7	WSU +1	UA +3	Tenn +1
P. Morgan (22-19)	UO +7	USC +12	UW +14	ASU +1	UA +2	Tenn +6
R. Weber (22-19)	UO +4	USC +11	UCLA +1	WSU +3	Stan +2	N. Dame +1
M. Ross (23-18)	UO +2	USC +2	UW +2	WSU +2	UA +2	Tenn +2
C. Blair (26-15)	UO +4	USC +8	UW +10	ASU +1	Stan +3	Tenn +4
C. Bouneff (21-20)	UO +7	USC +7	UW +10	WSU +3	UA +1	Tenn +1