

WRESTLING

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One journalist's adventure against Dan Vidlak

□ Almost George Plimptonish, one writer learns firsthand the Oregon star's best techniques and gets thrashed

By Erick Studenicka
Emerald Contributor

At the first Oregon wrestling meet I went to, I saw a kid who appeared to be in eighth grade setting up some water coolers. I thought it was great that Ron Finley, the Oregon wrestling coach, was letting some local kids act as waterboys and hang around with the "big guys."

About 10 minutes later, I was surprised to see the "waterboy" take off his sweats, walk to the center of the mat, and then precede to thrash his opponent by scoring a technical fall.

Since then, I've been able to recognize Dan Vidlak.

Vidlak, a two-time All-American, enters the Pacific-10 Conference Championships Friday enjoying perhaps his finest season. He is undefeated in dual meets and is ranked second in the country at 118 pounds. Oregon State coach Mark Johnson is ready to concede the conference title to Vidlak, saying that the senior probably won't even be tested at this meet.

So, the question is, how did Vidlak, who looks like your average supermarket check-out boy, become the best wrestler west of the Mississippi? What abilities have separated him from hundreds of other collegiate wrestlers and allowed him to become so dominant?

Figuring no amount of investigative journalism would distinctly answer those questions, I reasoned the only solution would be to turn to participative journalism and experience firsthand what it feels like to square off with an All-American. I would have to wrestle Vidlak.

Feeling like a modern day George Plimpton, I entered the wrestling locker room at the appointed time.

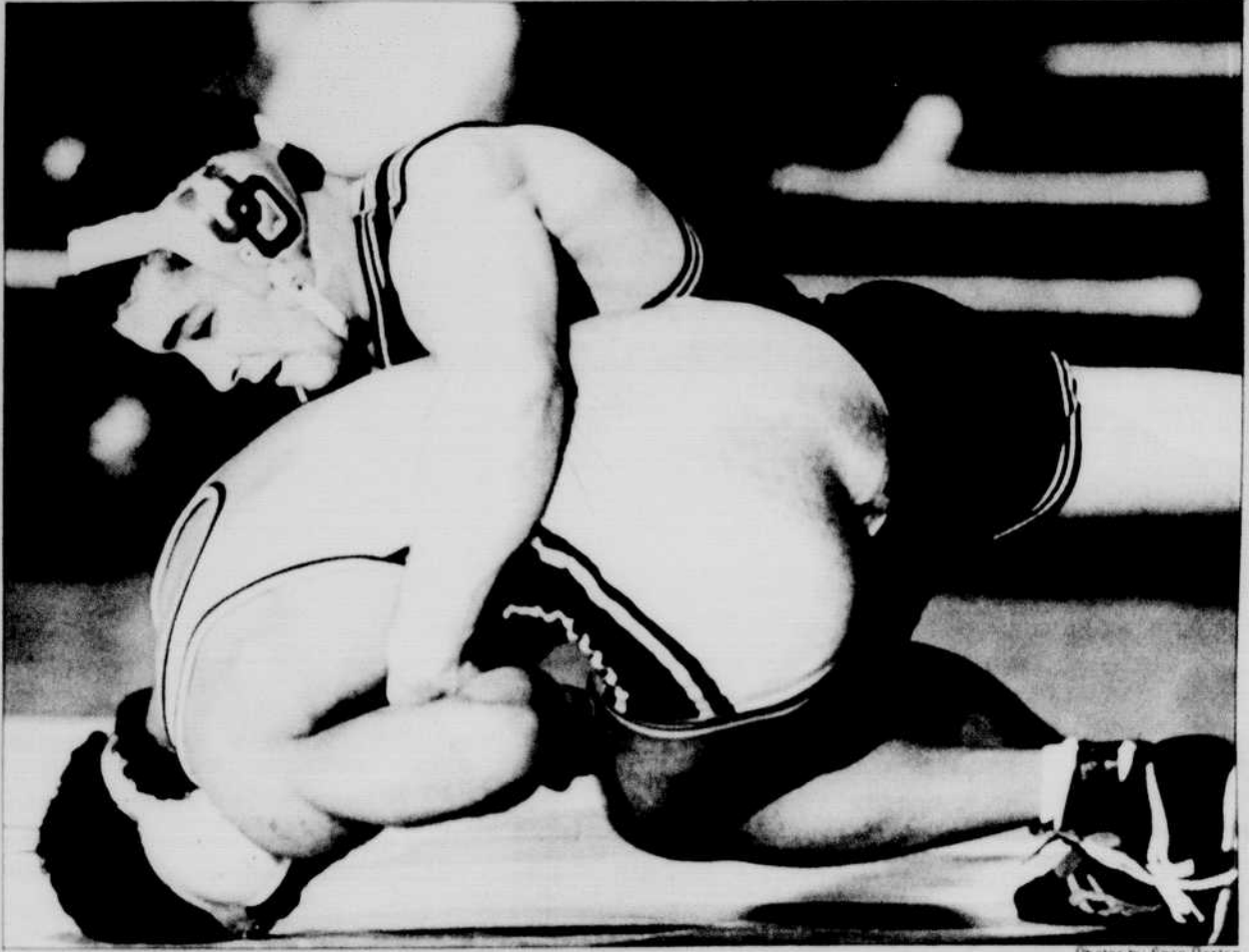
I found Dan in the locker room sauna. He had already practiced for two hours and was soaked in sweat. He told me to enter the sauna, saying, "It's a good way to warm up."

After about two minutes in the 115-degree heat, I told him I was warmed up enough.

We then entered the wrestling room. The wrestling room has an odd odor to it, sort of like how your P.E. locker smells after you left a sweaty T-shirt in there for a week.

Also, no fresh air is allowed in the wrestling room. The air is hot and heavy; it's as if you've entered a tropical climate. There doesn't seem to be much oxygen in the air, probably because it's only been exhaled four or five times before you get to breathe it.

Vidlak explained that the padded walls were in-



Oregon's Dan Vidlak wears his opponents down using a potent arsenal of moves. Vidlak signs autographs for some young fans (below).



bounds, but I forgot to ask how many points a wall toss was worth.

He began by explaining his wrestling style. Instead of relying on strength, he counts on superior quick-

ness and technique to defeat his opponents. He admitted that most of his opponents are stronger, evidence being that he has only recorded two pins in more than 100 collegiate matches.

Vidlak then gave me a quick lesson in his specialty, the takedown. His favorite is the "single-leg," where he quickly grabs his opponent's ankle and causes him to lose his balance.

He demonstrated the takedown on me a few times, locking on to my ankle in much the same way a small dog might. I asked if there was any counter to this maneuver. He said others had tried prayer.

Then it was my turn to try the takedown. I made a dive for his left knee and actually had a good hold of his leg for about two seconds before he made a reversal and began riding on my shoulders, kind of like the way Yoda rode on Luke's back in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

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ASU, OSU favored as Pac-10 tourney hits Mac Court

□ Oregon wrestlers could do well in several weight classes but aren't expected to challenge for team title

By Erick Studenicka
Emerald Contributor

The Arizona State wrestling team, owners of one of the longest winning streaks in Pacific-10 Conference tournament history, will place its title and seven-year streak on the line as the 1992 tournament championship descends on McArthur Court this weekend.

Arizona State has not lost a conference title since 1984, when Oregon State narrowly beat the Sun Devils by four points. Oregon, playing host to the tournament

for the first time since 1979, has not won the title since 1982.

The tournament, which will be divided into four sessions, will begin with first-round action at noon on Friday. The semifinals will begin 7 p.m. Friday, with championship finals scheduled for 7:30 Saturday evening.

The top three individuals in each weight class will advance to the NCAA finals at Oklahoma March 19-21. The following is a brief overview of each team.

ARIZONA STATE: With five All-Americans and three returning Pac-10 champions, Arizona State is favored to win its eighth straight tournament title.

The Sun Devils are a bit of a mystery team, however, as they went through their entire season without meeting a Pac-10 opponent in a dual meet and

'ASU is definitely the team to beat, but if we have a good tournament, we can upset them.'

— Mark Johnson,
Oregon State head coach

have compiled a losing dual meet season record.

"We don't really emphasize dual meets," Arizona State assistant wrestling coach Tom Ortiz said. "Because of the type of team we have, with strong wrestlers in some weights and weak wrestlers in others, we prepare more for tourna-

ments."

Ortiz said Arizona State's losing dual meet record was partially due to a difficult schedule, which included top-10 teams Iowa, Iowa State and Kansas.

Top wrestlers for the Sun Devils, with their national rankings in parentheses, include Shawn Charles (4) at 126 pounds, Marco Sanchez (5) at 134, Wayne McMinn (4) at 142, Ray Miller (4) at 158 and Mike Anderson (5) at heavy-weight. Sanchez, Miller and McMinn are all former Pac-10 champions.

"Our kids definitely have the pressure on them," Ortiz said. "They don't want to be the team that loses the streak."

One interesting note on the Sun Devils

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