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# Wrestlers prepare for NCAAs

By Erick Studenicka  
Emerald Sports Reporter

Oregon wrestlers Kevin Roberts, Cory Sonnen and Mat Sprague have been selected by the Pacific-10 Conference wrestling coaches as wild-card entrants for next week's NCAA Wrestling Tournament in Ames, Iowa.

The three will join heavy-weight Chris Anderson and 150-pounder Pat Craig on Oregon's NCAA tournament team. Anderson and Craig each qualified for the tournament by virtue of their respective second and third place finishes in the Pac-10 tournament held last week at Boise State.

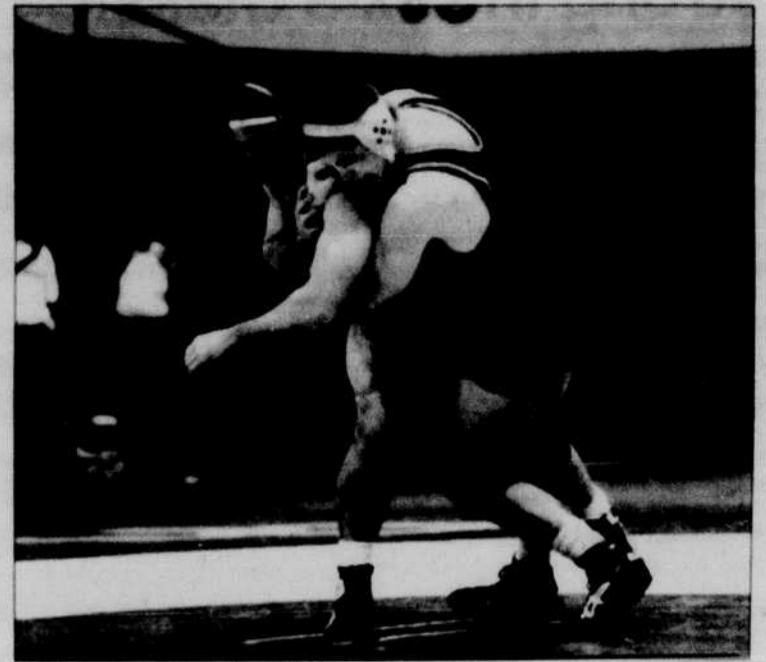
Redshirt freshman Kevin Roberts, who has a season record of 13-10, said making the tournament was a dream come true.

"Making the tournament is something you always think about when you're younger," Roberts said. "I'm pretty relaxed now, but I know when I step into the arena, the adrenalin will be going."

Sprague, the Duck's 167-pounder who took fourth in the conference meet, knows the top wrestlers in his weight division well. Of his eight losses during the season, four have come at the hands of opponents ranked in the top three nationally.

"Having the top ranked wrestler in the country (Arizona State's Ray Miller) in our conference is beneficial," said Sprague, a sophomore. "Facing the top ranked wrestlers lets you know what you have to do to beat the top wrestlers and it lets you know where you're at in comparison to them."

Sprague said his objectives for



Oregon wrestler Pat Craig (right) will be making his second appearance to the NCAA tournament next week in Iowa.

the NCAA tournament were the same as for any other tournament during the season.

"I want to win. I wouldn't even go if I didn't think I could win," Sprague said. "You have to look at it as if it were any other tournament; you can't go with an eighth place finish in mind."

Coach Ron Finley said the NCAA tournament would be a good learning experience for his young group of wrestlers.

"The NCAA tournament can be a frightening, overwhelming experience, especially when you have to wrestle someone from Iowa or Oklahoma State before 13,000 people and the entire crowd against you," Finley said. "This will be a good opportunity for our wrestlers to see that those guys from Iowa and

Oklahoma State are really no different and that they can be beaten."

Craig, the lone Senior among the qualifiers, is the only Oregon wrestler with NCAA tournament experience. Craig failed to place, however, as he was hampered by a dislocated shoulder.

Sonnen recorded the team's best record at 24-8 this season. Sonnen was ranked as high as No. 12 during the season and is currently the only ranked Oregon wrestler with his No. 15 in the latest poll.

Anderson is one of the most improved wrestlers on the team. After finishing fifth in the Pac-10 tournament a year ago, Anderson was the only Duck to make the Pac-10 championship round.

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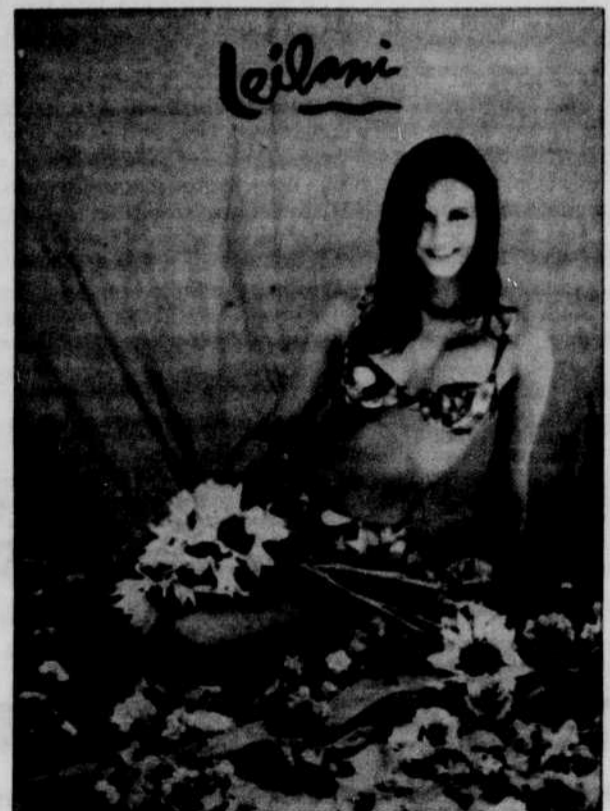
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