

UO wrestlers gear up for Civil War

Oregon will put national rankings on the line when it faces No. 19 Oregon State on Friday

By Joel Hood
Sports Reporter

Without all the hoopla and attention that surrounds the football team during its Civil War week, the No. 21 Oregon wrestling team will battle in-state rival No. 19 Oregon State today in Corvallis.

But the apparent lack of media hype doesn't make today's match any less important to Oregon's wrestlers or their supporters.

"This is the battle for the state, the battle for state bragging rights," said 158-pound senior Sean Morgan. "It's a very important match for us for a lot of reasons. It's a chance to beat a team that is ranked higher than us in the polls and in the conference. And it could prove to be a real confidence builder as well."

That confidence took a bit of a beating at the hands of No. 15 Lock Haven last Saturday at McArthur Court.

Oregon (4-1 overall, 3-0 in Pacific-10 Conference) recovered from an early six-point deficit to take the lead, but failed to come back a second time after a third-

period pin of freshman Doug Lee in one of the meet's final matches.

The 21-18 loss was the Ducks' first setback of the season and in some ways overshadowed Oregon's remarkable early season success.

"A lot of us were kind of upset after the loss to Lock Haven," heavyweight Rich Polkinghorn said. "We thought we had wrestled well and were in control of the match, but it just kind of got away from us. Now we've had time to put that match into perspective. We know it's a long season, and we all know how important a win over Oregon State would be."



A win against the Beavers today and Oregon would move to 4-0 in the Pac-10 and establish itself as a major player in the conference race. It would also reaffirm Oregon's up-and-coming moniker from coaches around the country, who this week moved the Ducks up nine spots in the national rankings despite the loss at home to Lock Haven.

"It's very important that we do well against Oregon State," said head coach Ron Finley, a Beaver

alumnus. "There are conference rankings and national rankings at stake. There are Pac-10 tournament seedings up for grabs, and I think the whole team is really geared up for this match."

By virtue of Oregon's Civil War sweep of the Beavers last season, confidence on the road against a top-20 team shouldn't be a problem.

"We learned a lot from our two wins against Oregon State last season," Morgan said. "That was a big step for this team last year and could be again this season."

Preseason expectations had the Beavers as one of the favorites to dethrone No. 5 Arizona State from atop the Pac-10. And with Oregon State's 6-4 overall record through its difficult fall schedule, which included matches against No. 1 Oklahoma State, it's easy to see why expectations were so high.

"I'd say it's a toss-up," Finley said. "They're a very solid team that would love to knock us off in front of their home fans. But I'm pleased with the way we've wrestled this season, and I think we have a good shot to beat them."

For fans who can't make the trip to Corvallis for Friday's 7:30 p.m. match, the delayed broadcast will appear on Fox Sports Northwest at 11 a.m. on Saturday.

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