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Quick: Sonnen transferred from BYU

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guy," Sonnen says. "I think I look for it a little more than other wrestlers. If I can take a guy down, I'll try to do it. I won't just stand by and let him get away. I'll try to jump on his head."

While the No. 19 Ducks struggled in their next two matches against No. 5 Arizona State and Boise State, Sonnen's remarkable winning streak continued.

He soundly defeated Sun Devil Jake Harmon to post only the third win by an Oregon wrestler against Arizona State, the defending Pac-10 champions. Oregon fell to Arizona State 27-12. The next day, Sonnen's 10-4 win over Boise State's Ryan Baumgartner brought the Ducks from eight points back to within striking distance of the Broncos with one match remaining. The dual meet ended in a tie.

"Chael has probably been the most consistent wrestler we've had this season," head coach Ron Finley says. "He has made such improvements since he first came to Oregon. He used to take a lot of chances, but now he's matured as a wrestler and is more careful with his opponents."

Part of Sonnen's maturity

came when he decided to transfer from Brigham Young, where he had spent a semester of his freshman year.

Despite being heavily recruited by Oregon during his junior season at West Linn High School, Sonnen signed a letter of intent with BYU for reasons that now escape him.

"I honestly can't tell you why I choose to go to BYU," Sonnen says. "I'm from Oregon, and I have always loved it here. Maybe I was a little intimidated at the thought of wrestling here."

Intimidated, but not in the ways that high schoolers are usually intimidated about college athletics. Sonnen's family is one steeped in wrestling tradition in the state of Oregon.

His father was an all-state wrestler at North Marion High School in Aurora. And his cousins, all nine of them, were wrestlers at some point during their lives. One such cousin, Cory Sonnen, was a Pac-10 Champion at 142 pounds for Oregon in 1994 and was awarded the Howard Wicklund Trophy in 1993 as the team's most valuable wrestler.

After spending a semester at

BYU, Sonnen found that his heart and family still resided in Oregon. Following a long legal battle regarding his transfer status from BYU — and an appeal that enabled him to compete for Oregon the following season — it seems Sonnen has taken the long road from West Linn to Eugene.

"It's all part of maturing as a wrestler and as a person," Sonnen says. "I have learned so much since I came back to Oregon. I'm a more confident wrestler and my technique has really improved."

So much so that last year Sonnen placed third at the University National Greco-Roman Championships in Colorado Springs, Colo., and looks forward to a possible return to the Olympic Training Center after his career with the Ducks.

But all future plans, Sonnen says, will remain up in the air until he fulfills what he has set out to do this season — avenge last season's fifth-place finish at the Pac-10 Championships and become the second Sonnen to earn a conference championship for Oregon and for Finley.

Just don't ask him to explain how he might do it.

Men: Five Pac-10 players named as Naismith finalists

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sentatives made the list. UCLA leads the parade with three nominees in seniors Toby Bailey and J.R. Henderson, along with junior Jelani McCoy. Arizona's backcourt of senior Miles Simon and sophomore Mike Bibby garnered the other two Pac-10 nomina-

tions.

Game of the week

Stanford at UCLA, Thursday, 7:30 p.m.

UCLA will be looking for revenge after losing to the Cardinal earlier this season. Stanford has hit a tough patch recently, dropping three of its last four, includ-

ing last weekend at Connecticut. The Bruins can pass the Cardinal and move into second place in the conference with a victory.

Rob Moseley is a sports reporter for the Emerald. His Pac-10 notes appear every Tuesday in the Emerald.

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