

UO trio learns, wins at NCAAs

■ Doug Lee led Oregon's three representatives at the NCAA Tournament with a fourth-place finish

By Scott Pesznecker
Oregon Daily Emerald

Two-time Pacific-10 Conference champion Doug Lee captured his first All-American honor with a fourth-place finish at the NCAA wrestling tournament on March 18 in St. Louis, Mo.

Two other Ducks, 133-pound Brian Watson and 157-pound Eugene Harris, traveled to the NCAAs but were eliminated early.

Wrestling at 184 pounds, Lee was denied third place by Minnesota's Brandon Eggum, who beat the junior 9-5. Vertus Jones of West Virginia delivered Lee his first loss on the previous day in the semifinal round.

Lee made his way to the consolation finals with an 8-3 victory over Rob Rohn of Lehigh. On the tournament's opening day, Lee beat Iowa's Jessman Smith, 5-3, and Lock Haven's Dave Murray, 10-7.

Oregon head coach Chuck Kearney was proud of his wrestler's finish.

"He had a tremendous week and an even better year," Kearney

said. "These championships were his opportunity to make a name for himself on the national stage and I think he accomplished that.

"It was the caper to an already great season. This should be a great learning experience for him and his senior season and I think he could be a force next year. We are already thinking of next season."

Lee's fourth-place finish was the highest by a Duck since now-assistant coach Jeremy Ensrud finished third in 1998. Lee's season record of 36-5 is the third-highest win total in Oregon history.

After recovering from a broken hand and nearly winning the Pac-10 title, Watson lost a 2-0 decision in the first round to Michigan's Joe Warren. He then lost in the wrestle-back portion of the tournament to Dave Stoltz of Illinois, 4-1. Watson wrapped up his season with a 15-11 record.

Harris lost a close match, 3-2, to Corey Wallman of Wisconsin in the first round. In the wrestle-back, Harris' season was put to an end by Brigham Young's Rocky Smart, who won by a 7-4 decision. Harris finished with a record of 27-15.

Watson and Harris "will be back and this will be a good learning experience for them for next season," Kearney said.



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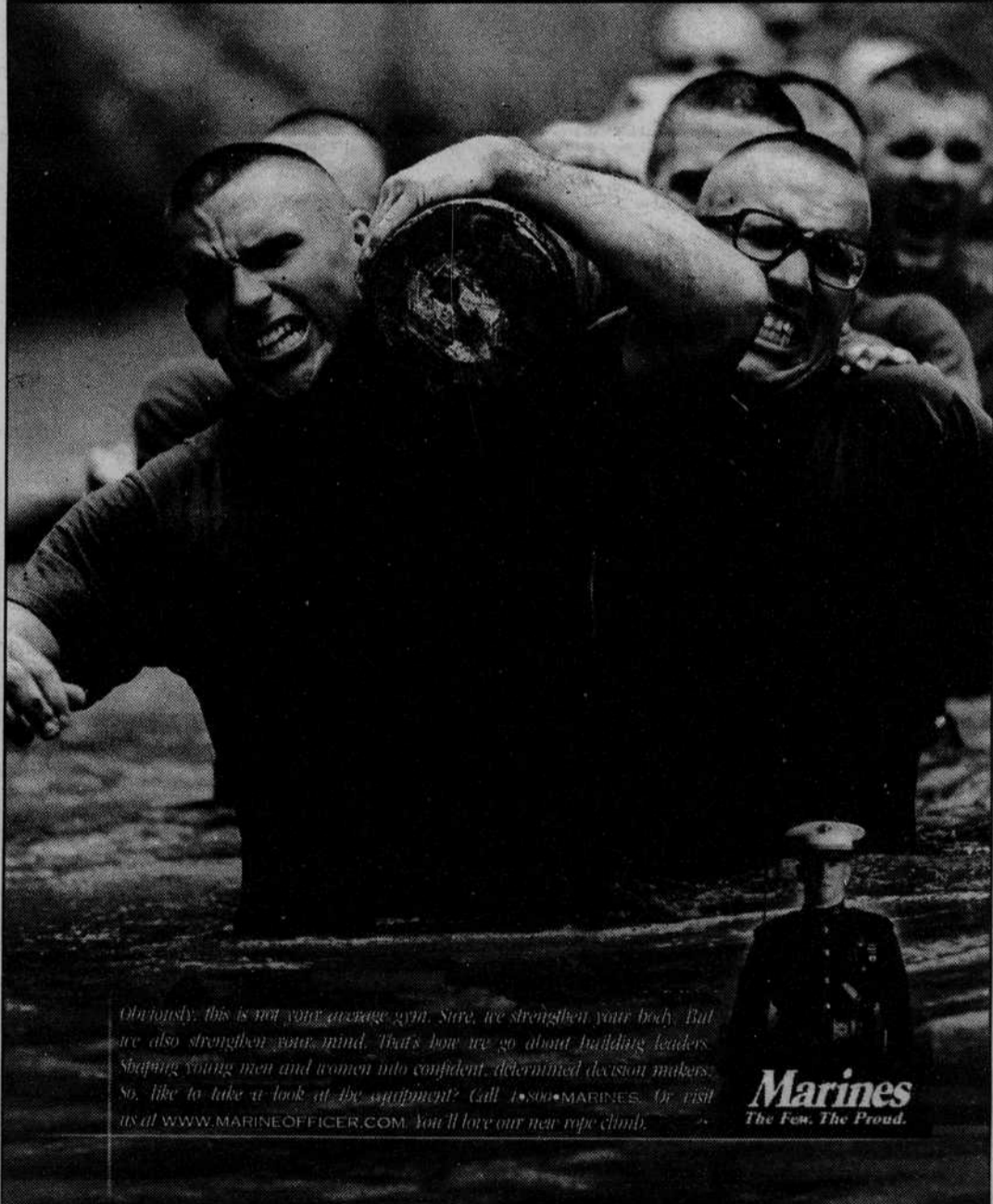
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