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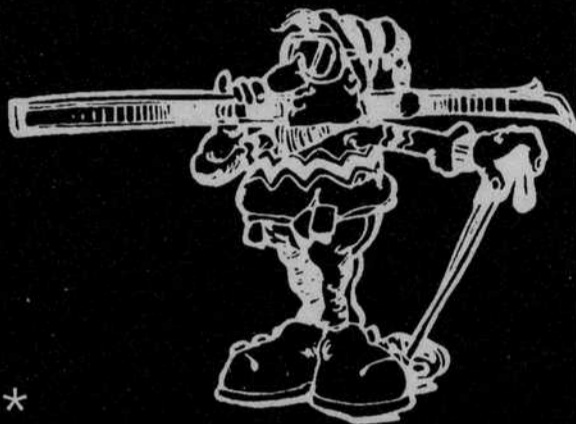


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UO wrestling team prepared for NCAA

■ The Oregon wrestlers will compete against the best in the nation in Albany, N.Y.

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

For the 18th consecutive year, members of the Oregon wrestling team will compete in the NCAA championships.

Oregon closed its season with a second place finish at the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament and a dual meet record of 9-7, 5-4 in the Pac-10. Seven wrestlers finished in the top four in the conference tournament, earning automatic invitations to Albany, N.Y., for the NCAAs, and one picked up a wild card selection to earn the trip. The Ducks' eight wrestlers is the most they have sent since nine Oregon wrestlers competed in 1981.

Seniors Eugene Harris (165 pounds), Shaun Williams (125) and junior Tony Overstake (157) all won individual titles in their weight classes at the Pac-10s and have the best shot at advancing in the national tournament.

Intermat's latest poll has Oregon ranked No. 19, while Pac-10 champion Boise State failed to make the top-20. Arizona State, who finished behind Oregon in third place at the conference tournament, holds the No. 11 slot.

The top contenders for the national team title are defending champion Minnesota, Iowa, Oklahoma State, Oklahoma and Michigan, whom Oregon lost to 30-9 on Jan. 11.

Perhaps the best story going into the nationals is Iowa State's 197-pounder Cael Sanderson. Sanderson, a senior, has yet to lose a match, going 35-0 this year and 154-0 throughout his career. He has been selected three times as the NCAA's Outstanding Wrestler and is a two-time Academic All-American.

Oregon's 197-pounder Jake Leair will not get the opportunity to face Sanderson, since he finished sixth at the Pac-10s.

In the 125-pound weight class, Williams is ranked No. 7 in the nation and the road to the national championship will probably go through Fresno State's No. 1 Stephen Abas, who has won two prior national titles.

The Ducks' best shot at a national title is with Harris, who holds a No. 4 ranking in his final season of collegiate wrestling.

Oregon's highest finish at the NCAAs was No. 11 during the 1979-1980 season. Last season, seven wrestlers attended the national tournament, and the team placed in a tie for 32nd.

E-mail sports reporter Chris Cabot at chriscabot@dailyemerald.com.

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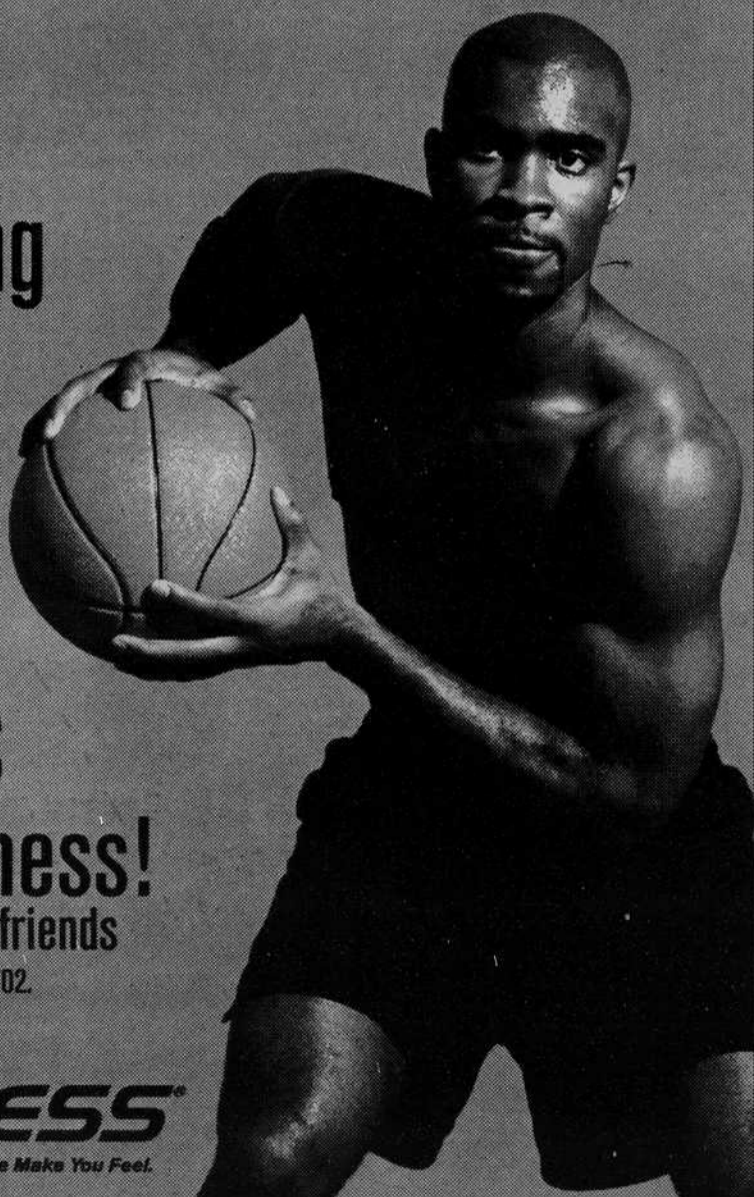
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