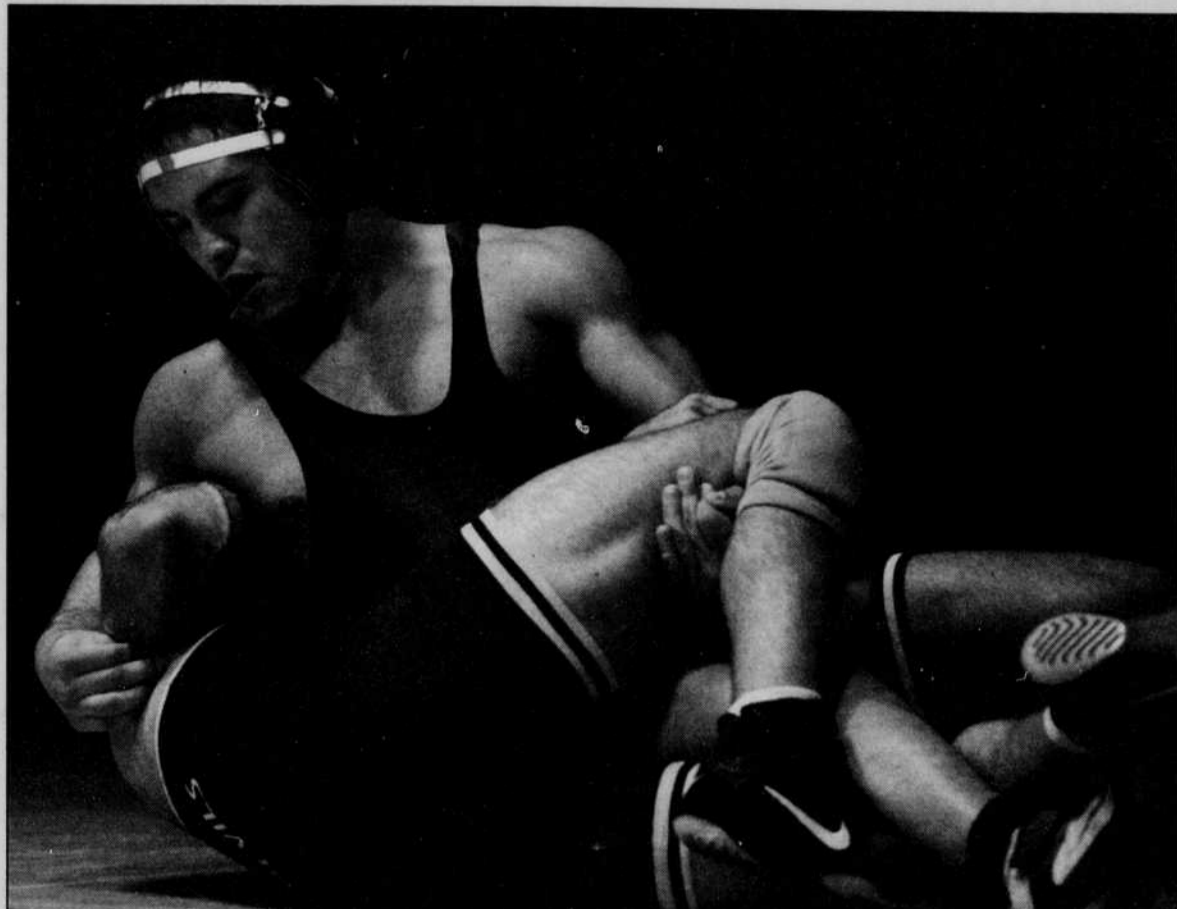


■ Duck wrestling



ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon's Joey Bracamonte is the No. 1 seed in the 165-pound class heading into Sunday's Pac-10 Championships in San Luis Obispo, Calif.

# Barker, Bracamonte secure top seeds for championship

*Ducks hope to improve on last season's ninth-place finish at the Pac-10 Championships on Sunday*

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS  
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

The postseason has arrived for a cadre of Oregon wrestlers who head to San Luis Obispo, Calif., on Sunday to compete in the 46th-annual Pacific-10 Conference Championships hosted by Cal Poly. The Ducks look to avenge last season's ninth-place finish at the Championships — their lowest since the Pac-10 was formed.

Leading the Ducks into action are senior Scott Barker and junior Joey Bracamonte. Both have delivered standout performances in every match this season and have earned No. 1 seeds in the 197- and 165-pound weight classes, respectively. Shane Webster will also compete. The junior from Sams Valley has wrestled in the 174-pound weight class for the majority of the season, but recently moved up to 184 where he will compete at the Championships. As Barker stated earlier this week, the competition

at the Championships will be nothing to overlook.

"I don't think it will be a walk in the park this weekend," Barker said. "These guys are coming to get it, and I expect a battle in every match."

Barker believes No. 7 Ryan Bader of Arizona State is his biggest threat. The last time they took the mat together was Jan. 30 at McArthur Court when Barker shut out the two-time conference champion en route to a 7-0 decision.

Last week, the Ducks ended their regular season by cruising to a 35-11 victory over Portland State at the State Fairgrounds in Salem. During the dual, Oregon head coach Chuck Kearney kept most of his starters on the bench allowing mat time for his less-experienced wrestlers.

This weekend's tournament is the end of the season for many who compete, and for those aspiring to go further, it's their last chance to improve

their resumés and earn a spot at the 2005 NCAA Championships in St. Louis. Forty individual berths will be awarded following the tournament going to the top three finishers in each weight class plus 10 wild card selections as determined by the coaches. Barker, Bracamonte and Webster are Oregon's only wrestlers who have experience in the NCAAs. Last season, Bracamonte and Webster finished in the top three in their weight classes at the Pac-10 Championships and found their way into the NCAAs; Webster finished sixth in the nation. While wrestling for Missouri, Barker reached the NCAAs twice and took second place at 197 in 2003.

The field competing includes all Pac-10 schools, which will be vying for the team title. After posting a flawless 8-0 record in conference duals, No. 19 Arizona State earned the top seed in the tournament. Action takes place Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Mott Gym on Cal Poly's campus. Later that evening, the semifinals will be held to conclude the day's competition.

The finals will take place Monday.

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