## Barker: Senior captures title at Pac-10 tourney this year

even lived in Germany for a year. Mitchell Barker now works for the CIA, but Barker doesn't know what his job entails.

"You could ask me questions about him," Barker said with a laugh. "But I have no answers."

Moving from city to city caused Barker to become independent, relying solely on himself for encouragement on and off the mat.

"I have always been a self-motivator," Barker said. "Wrestling is as much a team sport as it is an individual sport and picking myself up let me grow self-confidence and determination."

Barker feels that his ability to motivate himself is one of the key reasons he has been so successful in his career.

"In every match you really have only two options," Barker said. "You can easily give up at times and take a loss, or you can push yourself and keep fighting. Winning and losing comes down to whether or not you are willing to do your best."

After growing up in front of numerous backdrops, Barker and his family eventually landed in St. Louis, which he now calls his hometown. Barker attended Oakville High School and had no problem earning mat time under coach Rocky Streb. Barker reached the Missouri state finals in three consecutive years taking home titles in 1999 and 2000. He left Oakville with a plethora of Big 12 recruiters knocking on his door and holding wrestling scholarships. He passed on wrestling powerhouses like Nebraska and Oklahoma State to become a Tiger at Missouri just like his old coach Streb.

"(Missouri) seemed okay, since it was close to home, and I knew I wouldn't have trouble starting on the team," said Barker.

Barker's wrestling resume at Missouri would have satisfied most wrestlers, but it was not enough for Barker. After taking a year off to recover from a knee injury following the 2003 season, Barker transferred to Oregon where he felt comfortable wrestling for head coach Chuck Kearney.

"Oregon is a lot more laid back, and I like that," Barker said. "There is less pressure here and doing my best is good enough for my coaches."

Kearney was thrilled to have Barker on his 2004-05 roster, on which seniors were scarce. Kearney knew that Barker's work ethic and accomplishments would make him a worthy tutor for the team's younger wrestlers. Barker's teammates have come to expect success from him.

"He does what he is suppose to do, and that is win matches," teammate Cody Parker said. "When we need him to get points, he does it."

Kearney's expectations of Barker have also been met. This season, Barker has posted a team-best 31 wins and 15 pins. Last week at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships in San Luis Obispo, Calif., Barker took home a Pac-10 title after defeating reigning two-time conference champion Ryan Bader.

"He is a national level competitor," Kearney said. "He provided an example of what a top wrestler in the nation looks like and how hard he works."

Going into the season, Kearney felt that Barker could do more for the program than the program could do for Barker.

"With an athlete like Scott, your job as coach is not to change him, but to mold him," Kearney said. "He has been a leader on this team and a calming influence."

At the NCAA Championships next weekend, Barker will be joined by Parker and teammates Joey Bracamonte and Shane Webster, who received bids for the tournament following the Pac-10 Championships. Although Barker is excited to compete, his game plan remains the same.

"I'm just going to do my best," Barker said. "More importantly, I'm going to have fun and leave it all on the mat."

After college, Barker plans on attending a fire fighting academy, preferably in Oregon. He has no wish to coach wrestling.

"There is much more I wish to do with my life outside of wrestling," Barker said. "I don't want to ever limit myself or look back on my life and see it spent doing just one thing."

For Barker, a man who has lived life beyond limits, this outlook is both his legacy and a fitting tribute to his potential success.