Fencing: Conner uses late three-point spurt to take the title 15-12

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from pool play are then used to give each fencer a seeding in the second stage of the tournament, a March Madness-style bracket.

The Ducks fared well in the robin. Conner fencer/coach Adam Lake placed first in their sections, while Joseph Leary earned a high seed with a second-place finish. Leary advanced to the round of 16 before being bounced by finalist Evan Ranes. Lake made it to the semifinals,

where Ranes defeated his second Duck of the day. This set up a confrontation with Conner, who was coming off his best match to the tournament, where he dispatched a former member of the Canadian national team 15-8.

"I guess it was just my day and not his," Conner said.

The championship bout was tight right down to the wire. Late in the match, Conner and Ranes found themselves in a deadlock at 12-12. In an impressive flurry, Conner registered the next three points to take the win and Lake said. the tournament, 15-12.

"It feels like by winning, I'm paying homage to those who brought fencing here," Conner said.

Lake finished in third place and Leary rounded out the top 15 of the final standings. With such a strong showing, it is clear that the Oregon Fencing Club has come a long way since Lake took over the club about three and a half years ago.

"(The Club) was a place to fence where I could teach a little bit,"

The Club travels to about 15 tournaments in a year, in addition to regular practices. Conner and Lake also take lessons in Portland and spent part of last summer at a fencing camp in Hungary. In addition, Lake offers students a chance to learn the sport each year with a beginners fencing class. Conner is glad he overcame his initial reluctance to become involved in fencing and grasped the distinctive challenges that fencing presents.

"Every opponent gives you a different dilemma," Conner said.

Because the trophy from the Leon Auriol Open rotates from champion to champion, Conner and the team have a year to reflect on their accomplishment. When the trophy is returned, Conner's name will be engraved alongside past winners, including fellow Oregonian and Olympian Cody Mattern.

"There are all these Olympians and then me," Conner said. "It's nice to be in that company."

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