

Long, Thomas lead Cougs to state net title

By Brian Rood
Of The Print

Even though the Oregon Community College Men's State Tennis Tournament was forced to "move to higher ground," so to speak, and shift the tournament from Mt. Hood Community College to the Glendover Tennis Center when the weather refused to cooperate this past weekend, it affected the CCC netmen little as the Cougs gained wins in three positions to repeat as state champions.

The Cougs totaled 12 points while second place Lane had eight, followed by Mt. Hood and Chemeketa with seven apiece, Umpqua with five and Blue Mountain with two.

David Long and Dave Thomas started the ball rolling as they gained victories in the number one and two singles, respectively, as well as capturing the title at the number-one doubles position where they have lost only one match all year.

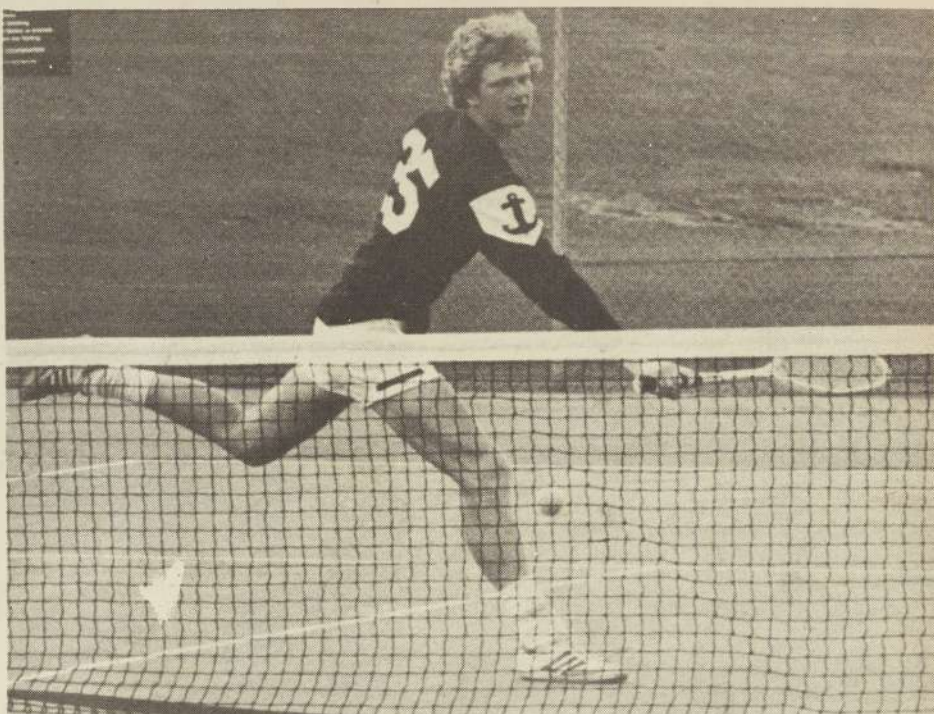
Enroute to his state title, Long defeated Matt Shike from Umpqua, 6-0, 6-2, and little

trouble with Chemeketa's Jeff Kirk in the second round, winning that match 6-2, 6-3. In the finals against Chuck Goodin, Long took the first set, 6-2, but dropped the second set 4-6, before winning the rubber set of the match, 6-3. Long had a total of 15 match points against Goodin but several mistakes allowed his Lane opponent breathing room before Long cut off the oxygen.

Playing at the number-two singles slot, Dave Thomas had relatively little trouble as he was like a hot knife through butter at the state meet. Thomas' first match went two sets (as did all of his matches) as he defeated SWOCC's

Monty Schumacher, 6-4, 6-0. Lane's Dave Walloch was the next to fall before the quick, hard-hitting Thomas. This time the score was 6-4, 6-3. In the finals, Thomas took care of Scott Elliot from Mt. Hood, 7-5, 6-3, and CCC had another state champion.

Unfortunately, the number-three singles player for the Cougs, Dave Savage, was not blessed with the success that



STATE CHAMP—Dave Long shows the form that earned him a state championship at the number one singles position. Staff photo by Duffy Coffman.

Thomas and Long enjoyed. He lost in the first round of competition to John Hubbard from Umpqua.

Probably the performance of the match for the CCC hard-courtiers came at the number-four singles slot where Jeff Alexander lanced through the competition, making him the third Cougar to gain a state title. Said men's tennis Coach Rich Taylor, "We knew Jeff had the ability to win. It was just a matter of playing up to his potential." And apparently he did just that as only one of the sets in his three matches was even close. Alexander defeated Brian McGinty from Linn-Benton, 6-1, 6-1, walked away from Umpqua's Dave Rountree, 6-2, 6-2, and blitzed Lonnie Gregory from Chemeketa in the first game of his finals match, 6-1, before edging him in the second game, 7-6.

And while the number-two doubles team of John Hazlett and Jeff Alexander lost in the first round to the team from Blue Mountain, the number-one team of Long and Thomas stifled the opposition on the road to the title at that spot. Long and Thomas defeated teams from Mt. Hood, Blue Mountain and Chemeketa and should continue to win as a team in the regionals this upcoming weekend at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton.

While the CCC netmen ran into no serious trouble at the state match, things may be somewhat different at the regionals. With the likes of Treasure Valley in the Cougs' path it may turn out that lady luck will play an important part in deciding who will be the regional champion and certainly if the Cougs expect to win the tournament.

In the regionals it will be important for some of the players lower down on the ladder to win at least one match because, unlike the state meet,

six singles positions will be scored as well as the scores of three doubles matches.

The line-up the Cougs will use in the regionals will be just a touch different than that used at state with Dave Thomas scheduled to play at the number-one singles position and Dave Long to move to number two. This switch is the result of a playoff match between the two about a week ago that Thomas won which earned him the right to play as the number-one man. However, whether or not Long or Thomas plays at one or two will be the key to the Cougs' success, as both those players possess comparable skills. Both should win at their respective positions.

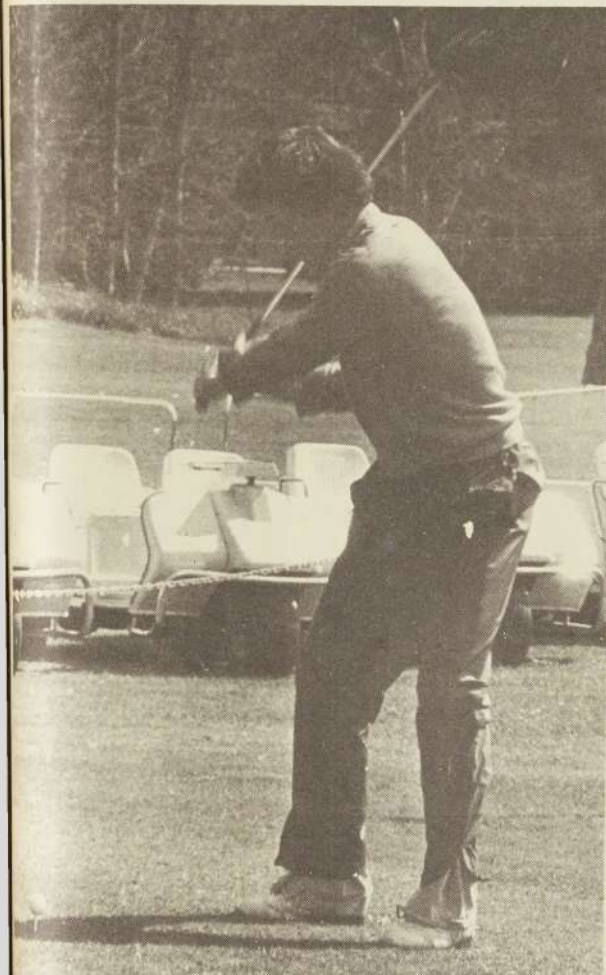
The real key to the success of the CCC tennis team lies in number 3-6 and at the number two and three doubles positions. Commenting on this, Coach Taylor offered these remarks, "Jeff Alexander will have to play as good at number four as he did at the state and John Hazlett will have to win at number six." Asked about the number-three slot, Taylor said that Dave Savage has the ability to win there, but that the draw has a lot to do with it. The number-five singles player will be Dan Alexander who is an excellent athlete but is somewhat of an enigma right

now. It is really not known what he will be able to do. A win from Alexander would prove very advantageous to the Cougs.

Behind Long and Thomas in the doubles pairings, John Hazlett and Jeff Alexander will make up the number-two team and cannot afford to lose as quickly as they did in the state match. And at the number-three doubles slot Dave Savage and Dan Alexander will team up and hopefully produce at least one point for the Cougs.

In a general overview of the state match, Taylor said, "We could finish anywhere from first to fourth. It will just depend on the help we get from other schools." Taylor emphasized that the Cougs will definitely need some help from some of the other schools in the competition including Lane and Mt. Hood if Treasure Valley is to be beaten.

The key for the Cougs, along with getting help from some of the other schools, will be their ability to win matches lower down the ladder. If they can do that, repeating as the Region 18 champs is feasible. But if they are not able to get some fire power from those individuals, a trip for the team to Ocala, Florida, and the national tournament may never come to be.



RELAXATION, CONCENTRATION—Apparently CCC golfer Dan Hixson has both of these key ingredients for success as he is consistently the top golfer in the Cougar matches.

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