

Challenges made to axing of nationals travel

(cont. from page 1)

Reportedly, the major motivation for the decision, made by a 5-3 vote, was economic. Generally poor economic conditions in the state combined with a state-wide rash of bond-levy failures have combined to endanger not only nationals participation by Oregon's community colleges, but threaten the very existence of athletics in the schools.

"I don't know for sure, but my guess is that this is probably because of the economy," said Chuck Hudson, Athletic Direc-

"That's one thing that bothers me, this is not a monetary issue"--Larry Wright, Athletic Advisory Committee.

tor at the College. "A lot of the community colleges are having trouble passing levies."

Eldon Schafer, president of Lane Community College recently told the Eugene Register-Guard, "Most of the presidents strongly support the opportunities for community college students to compete at the national level.

"But we were caught in a cross-fire. There is the tightening budget situation and we were trying to dig more out of our communities when we already are going for more support," Schafer said.

The cost of sending College athletes to nationals this year, according to Roberts, totaled more than \$13,000. The men's cross country team, one woman cross country runner, two wrestlers, 11 men tracksters, two women tracksters, and the women's tennis team plus coaches for each sport accounted for the cost.

"The problem is that we don't know who or how many people will be going to nationals," Roberts said. "If we run into a few teams we could be in real trouble financially."

Larry Wright, a College

Board member who serves on the Athletic Advisory Committee, expressed serious doubt that money is the real issue.

"That's one thing that bothers me," Wright said. "This is not a monetary issue. If money is an issue, then that's something we need to address.

"As far as I can determine, some of the colleges couldn't afford nationals travel and they didn't want anyone else to have the chance to go," he said.

"It bothers me the way they (the OCCA Presidents) went about voting on this," Wright continued. "Some of

the schools who voted don't even have athletic programs. We need to look at who should be voting and who shouldn't. The schools with no athletic programs shouldn't be voting on this."

Wright also said that the decision on whether a school sends athletes to nationals should be left to individual school districts.

"If we as a board decide we don't want to send kids to nationals, that's great," he said. "But someone else has told us that, and that's not right.

"I believe that a group of presidents getting together to make decisions like this is stepping outside their responsibilities," he added.

Board members Ralph Groener and Roger Rook, along with Wright make up the Athletic Advisory Committee. Groener, who was unavailable for comment, was pointed to as a key figure in the investigation of the legality of the presidents' decision.

"Ralph isn't sure of the legality of this," Wright stated. "He doesn't think it's in the jurisdiction of the college presidents to cut any programs."

Les Tipton, president of the Clackamas Community College Education Association and spokesman for the College faculty and coaching staff on the nationals travel issue, also pointed to the issue as political, and not financial.

"It could be justified as financial," Tipton said, "but that's a political justification. It's not realistic.

"All of us realize the present economic situation, but should that eliminate certain programs? No, it shouldn't," he stated. "It might curtail or alter them, but not eliminate them.

"It's political. Presidents playing 'if you do this, then I'll do that' games. Blue Mountain voted against nationals with the stipulation that they could go in rodeo, the only sport they compete at nations in.

"When there are tight times like now, we need to keep it from being a 'pet project' time where you eliminate programs you don't like.

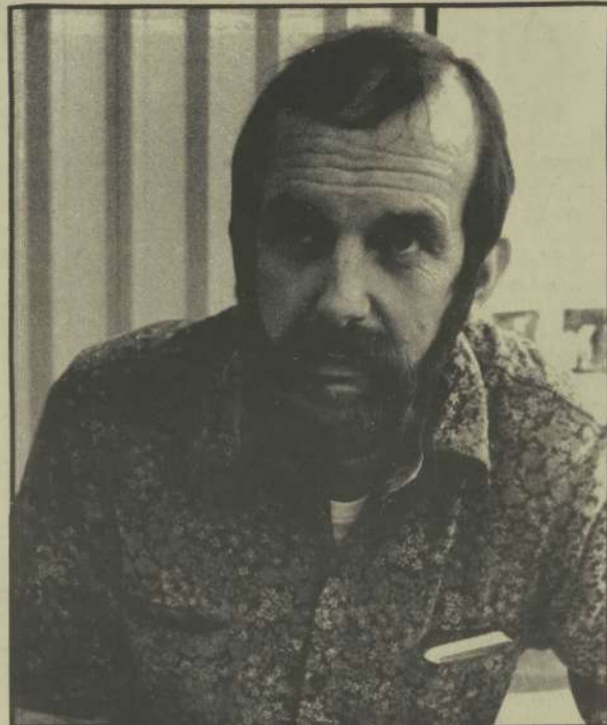
"I feel that the athletic program is a whipping boy," he continued. "Athletics is always the first thing cut when the economy is down. This could happen to any program. They could just as easily cut out nationals for music, speech, forensics, or whatever they choose," he said.

Tipton also said that a declaration will probably be made soon that suggests that colleges make their own decision on the issue of nationals.

Roberts was optimistic that the ending of nationals travel and the league merger would have some advantages for the College's total athletic program, but expressed some concern for two certain sports.

"I think in wrestling it would have an impact," Roberts said. "possibly it could hurt track. I think it would be hard on wrestling particularly."

Clackamas wrestling Coach Norm Berney said, "I feel now that wrestling would



Staff photo by Duffy Coffman **LES TIPTON**

survive possibly one year, maybe into the next year. After that, wrestling in the state would be eliminated.

"Wrestling is an individual sport," he explained. "Whether a kid makes it to nationals or not, he'd like to have that goal. In individual sports a coach goes out and works hard with

feeling is that if there's anything we can do that will save nationals, then let's do it. I just don't feel that enough proper research has been done on this.

"I'll go along with whatever they decide," he continued, "as long as they research it thoroughly and go

"I'll go along with whatever they decide as long as they research it thoroughly and go along with what the people want"--Norm Berney, College wrestling coach

an individual to get him to his best. This would cut that person off at a certain level.

"They don't do that in any other program," Berney said. "If a person excels in an academic or any other program, he gets national recognition. In individual sports, my own personal feeling from past experience is that you can't operate on a one state basis.

"I'm not challenging anyone," he said. "I don't have a sour grapes attitude, but my

along with what the people want."

Clackamas President John Hakanson, according to Roberts, voted in favor of nationals. Hakanson was unavailable for comment.

"Clackamas voted against dropping national travel," Roberts told the Register-Guard. "It was our feeling that it should be a local decision, and that the athletes should be able to go on to the next pinnacle."



COLLEGE STUDENTS COMPETE in tug-o-war during Thursday's intramural superstars competition. Staff photo by Duane Hiersche



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