

Wrestlers grapple with America's best

MANDY GOOD
Sports Editor

Clackamas wrestlers hosted a highly competitive tournament Saturday Jan. 8th. Ten sanctioned teams competed, including national champions from Northern Idaho and Northern Montana. A significant amount of traveling was also done by schools as far away as Arizona and Canada.

"This was the toughest tournament we have ever put on here; this is the first year that we were able to get Northern Montana to come here and Arizona as well," said wrestling coach Lloyd Martindale.

Four of the team members made it to the semifinals in the tough competition and completed the tournament with fifth place.

Chuck Buffington wrestling in the 141 weight class, Jacob Pence wrestling 174 pounds, Nykriem Kjell westling 184 pounds and Cody Sacher wrestling heavyweight were the Clackamas athletes that placed in the tournament. The level of competition was hard for many to comprehend.

"They're so young, I don't think that the guys realized how tough it was; they just went out and wrestled and had fun," said Martindale.

The wrestlers and coaching staff are looking at the large picture. These tournaments are the stepping stones to give them practice and experience for the Nationals.

"We're looking for big results at the national tournament; I expect to have several all-Americans," said Martindale.

The team has already grown in the brief time that they have been wrestling in college competition.

"Throughout the year we've gone from being a group of high school wrestlers to a group of guys that can compete at a college level," explained Martindale.

Another large tournament set to be held on Saturday will prepare the men for the future strong competition that they will see throughout the season.

"We have another big tournament coming up Saturday the 15th, the competition level will probably be pretty similar,

and I expect the guys to do a lot better just after having the experience of the big tournament," said Martindale.

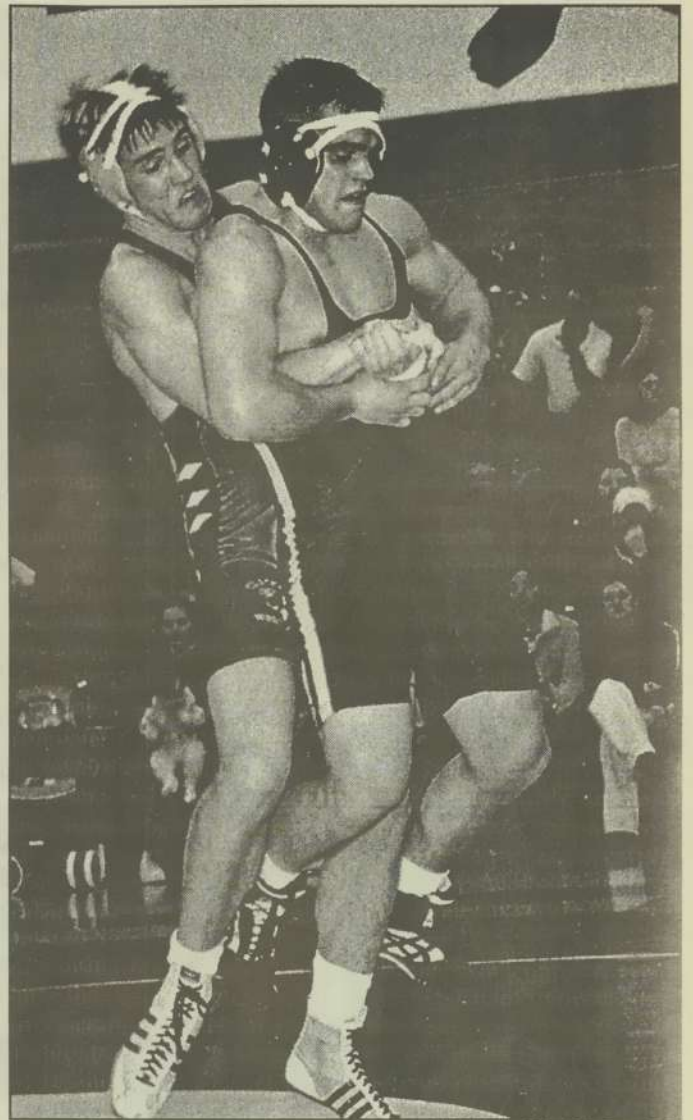
The wrestlers still have a little work to do on their wrestling technique. The coaches are practicing with many moves and showing the men how to use the best move possible.

"Our guys are still a little stiff. They haven't learned to loosen up and to let their wrestling technique flow; they are waiting for one move instead of taking advantage of a move when it is there," said Martindale.

The team continues to learn quickly with enthusiasm for attending the Nationals and competing like champions.

"We started today working on our technique and I saw improvements from 3 o'clock to 5 o'clock today. I don't think that we have any major problems that are going to hold us back right now," said Martindale.

"I've never had a group of guys as disciplined and as hard working. It's fun to be around a group of guys that is really hard-working," Martindale concluded.



TIMOTHY A. BELL / Clackamas Print

Jacob Pence (on the left) fought his way to the semi-finals and placed fifth at Clackamas' Invitational Tournament in the 174 lb. weight class last Saturday. Pence, who competes in one of the toughest weight classes in wrestling, is part of a squad that Head Coach Lloyd Martindale believes is the 'hardest working' and 'most disciplined' that he's ever worked with.

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