



LEFT: Sophomore John Bates defeated his opponent on Saturday, making him the 2007-2008 Heavyweight Champion for Region 18. He also held the same title in the 2006-2007 season.

LEFT BELOW: Derick Bartlemay struggles to escape the hold of his opponent. Bartlemay was a 2006-2007 All-American team member. He is a sophomore, and wrestles in the 141 weight category.

All photos by Kayla Berge Clackamas Print

Laying their hearts on the mat

The wrestling team competed in the NJCAA Region 18 Championships on Saturday, Feb. 9

Andrea Simpson
Sports Editor

...ley, North Idaho, Pima CC and Southwestern Oregon CC.

Although the Cougars fell short of their expectations, they still managed to place third - 114 points behind North Idaho College of Coeur d'Alene - with 2 and a half points. Southwestern Oregon CC barely beat Clackamas with 7 points.

The Cougars are also sending eight of their athletes on to nationals.

Head Coach Josh Rhoden said after the meet, "We had six in the championship finals and two in the consolation finals. We have eight going to nationals, and that's really good. We also have the champion heavyweight [John Bates]."

The other team members attending the national competition in Rochester, Minn., are Vance Beeson, Derick Bartlemay, Mike Beeson, Stephan Gonzales, Kris Spencer, Richard Jensen and newly added alternate Brandon Jackson.



The Cougars went into the regional tournament with confidence, but minor mistakes held them back.

"I'm a little let down," Rhoden said. "I had high hopes going into it. We had already beat North Idaho in a dual meet for the first time at Clackamas; we had never done that before. We had the potential to win regionals or at least get second. It's not what we wanted it to be, but that's OK, too."

Earlier in the season, Clackamas had already faced their main opponent, North Idaho, the team that ended up being their only competition in the finals.

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Head Wrestling Coach

"We played North Idaho in every final," Rhoden said. "Four of the six matches had already been played in the season, and we had beaten them, so we thought that we were sitting good."

"They just came out fired-up and fed off of that. There was nothing we could do, which is the worst feeling in the world. But I think we just need to work on technique. There were a few minor mistakes that will be easy to fix before nationals."

Next for the Cougars is the national competition, and the team is already working on the slip-ups they made on Saturday.

"I think what happened at regionals ... I think it keeps us hungry for nationals," Rhoden said. "I know it is sitting sour in their stomachs because they are down here working really hard."

The team will be traveling to the national competition on Feb. 22-23.

Coach of the Year 2007-2008

Also at the tournament, Rhoden received the prestigious Coach of the Year award.

"It is very deserved," said Athletic Director Jim Jackson. "He worked very hard at restrengthening Clackamas, and it showed in our dual meets. Josh was disappointed at the placing at regionals, but those things happen."

"That's the funny thing about wrestling; anything can happen, and it does. He just needs to keep strengthening what he's doing. People forget that he has only been coaching here for two years, and he has done a lot in those two years."

Rhoden had mixed feelings about receiving the award.

"Initially - I'll be honest - it was bittersweet. I was disappointed after finals, but it is a great honor. And really, it is a coaching staff of the year award. I have great assistant coaches that give it their all - I am just the face with the name."

BELOW: Head Wrestling Coach Josh Rhoden concentrates on the match on the mat. This is Rhoden's second year as coach.



BELOW: Derick Bartlemay works hard to control his opponent in his match on Saturday. Bartlemay lost but still qualified for the national competition in Rochester, Minn.