

Mitchell, Noon claim individual titles at Region 18 wrestling championships

Andrew Millbrooke
Sports Editor

No. 4 ranked Clackamas couldn't snare a third straight Region 18 championships on Saturday at Randall gym, but the Cougars did advance eight wrestlers to the NJCAA Championships on Feb. 22 and 23 in Des Moines, Iowa. No. 1 ranked North Idaho advanced eight wrestlers to the finals in convincingly winning the Region 18 title with 136.5 points.

"The kids did a pretty good job," said Clackamas head coach Josh Rhoden. "We qualified eight guys out of 10 weight classes for nationals." The Cougars finished with 113.5 points.

No. 1 ranked Trent Noon, a sophomore, and No. 2 Jacob Mitchell, a freshman, both secured individual titles for Clackamas, as three Cougars earned second place finishes and three more placed fourth. The top four finishers in each weight class earned berths in the national tournament.

"Me and Trent, the team captains, that is what we're supposed to do," said Mitchell. Rhoden knew what to expect from his two team captains.

"Both wrestled really well," said Rhoden of Noon and Mitchell. "That's what we expect from those guys, they're our leaders. They've been doing great all year and had great seasons."

Noon swept through the 174 pound class with two major decisions, before an overtime victory over No. 2 ranked Kyle Sweedman of North Idaho in the finals. Noon secured a takedown 18 seconds into the overtime period to claim a 3-1 victory and solidify his No. 1 ranking.

"It feels good, just glad I got it done," said Noon. "To finally win the region title, after not winning last year, it feels good. It's good to know I'm in shape enough to go overtime and finish my shots. I'm just gonna keep working hard to get that national title."

Rhoden told Sweedman that he is tired of seeing him, but he knows they will probably meet again in Iowa. "Awesome for

Trent, great win for him," said Rhoden. "That's probably going to be a national finals match right there."

Sweedman agreed with Rhoden. "I'm sure we'll meet up again," said Sweedman. "I'm guessing that will be the national finals."

Mitchell dominated No. 8 ranked Mike Williams of Western Wyoming in the heavyweight final match and is confident heading into the national tournament. Mitchell pinned his first two opponents and almost had Williams pinned in the final.

"All the work I put in, it's easy for me," said Mitchell. Asked about what to expect at nationals,

Mitchell said, "I expect to win, but what I want is a team national championship. A lot of people came through and placed where they needed to place today."

Rhoden likes what he sees out of his big and talented freshman. "He's only got three losses and they are all Division I kids," said Rhoden. "He's had an awesome year."

Clackamas' No. 4 ranked freshman Beau Roberts wrestled a tremendous match in the 149 pound final against North Idaho's No. 1 Jeremy Golding, before settling for an 8-6 loss. Golding was awarded a controversial two point takedown that ended up being the difference in the match.

Freshman Jake Laden suffered a defeat in the 197 pound final to North Idaho's V.J. Giulio, but still earned a national berth for the Cougars with his second place finish. CCC Freshman C.J. Palmer forfeited his final match at 133 pounds to rest his hurt shoulder for nationals.

Both Sage Ornelas and Steve Conn earned a spot at nationals by losing third place matches to gain the Region 18 fourth seed. Ornelas qualified in the very tough 125 pound class, while Conn made it through in the 184 pound class.

Conn impressed his coaches, teammates and especially Mitchell. "Steve Conn is on the heat right now," said Mitchell. "We call him 'The Heater.'" Rhoden also was impressed the way Conn came through.

"You couldn't ask for a better kid to do well," said Rhoden. "He's been here for three years and he works really hard. We are excited for him as a staff." Making it through the 'toughest region in the nation' to qualify for nationals is a major accomplishment.

"Some of these weight classes, in talking with the other coaches, it's like as tough as you are going to see at nationals," said Rhoden.

"All four guys in some weight classes here are going to place at nationals."

Clackamas freshman A.J. Ballard lost his spot at 141 pounds late in the season, but moved up two weight classes and fought his way through five matches to qualify fourth at 157 pounds. A "true fourth" place match must be wrestled if the fourth and fifth place finishers have not wrestled already in the day.

"Five matches was rough," said Ballard. Although Ballard was the fifth place finisher, he earned a chance in a "true fourth" match and he took advantage.

"I told him this is the opportunity you wanted," said Rhoden. "You just have to go get it."

Ballard said he wasn't affected by moving up two weight classes as he is a more natural 157 pounder. "I'm pretty stoked," said Ballard. "It's kind of been a weird year. Losing my spot at the end of the year and then moving up two weight classes and winning the spot at 157. In high school I wrestled not cutting weight and now I'm not cutting weight again and it feels right. It's where I feel more comfortable."

Rhoden was impressed with Ballard's performance. "It wasn't easy," said Rhoden. "He took the hard way for sure. I think the 157 pound class is a better fit for him. He looks like a good full-size 157-pounder."

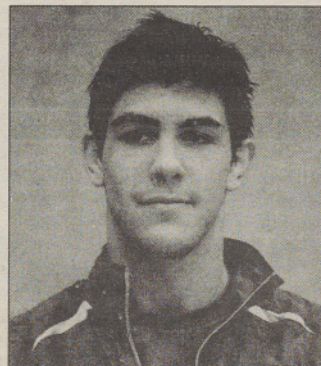
Rhoden and the Cougars have a little less than two weeks to prepare for the national tournament. "We'll give them tomorrow off and get back to work Monday," said Rhoden. "We'll start conditioning, and just getting everybody refocused. We'll give them a little bit of down time, just to get the bodies healed up a little bit. We take off a week from Wednesday to Des Moines. We'll fly out there, get some practices in and get ready to roll."

In a voting of the Region 18 coaches, Highline's Lucas Huyber at 184 pounds earned Outstanding Wrestler and North Idaho's Pat Whitcomb was named Coach of the Year.

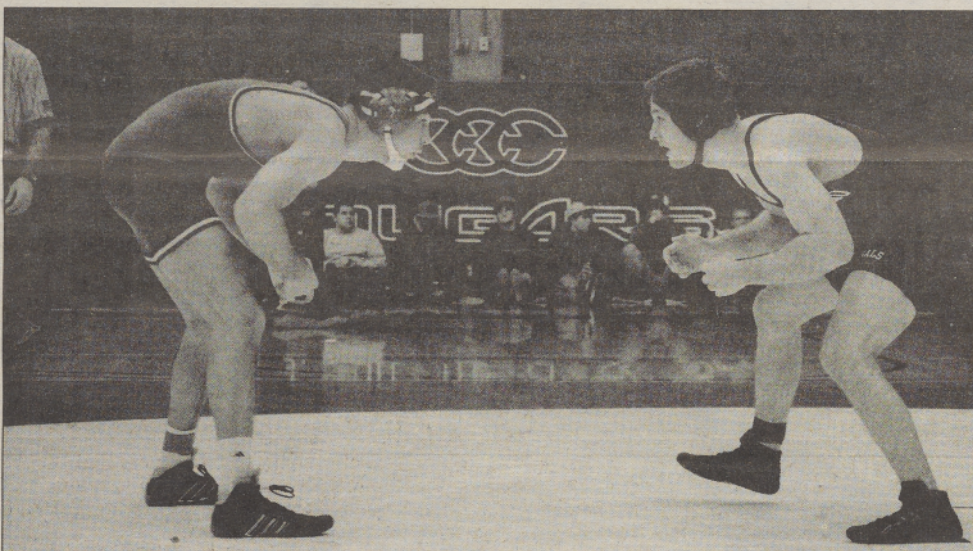
The rest of the team scoring for the region was Northwest Wyoming 98, SWOCC 95.5, W. Wyoming 88.5, Highline 82.



MITCHELL



NOON



Clackamas' Trent Noon, left, the No. 1 ranked returning All-American sophomore, faces off with North Idaho's No. 2 ranked Kyle Sweedman in the Region 18 finals at 174 pounds. Noon defeated Sweedman 3-1 in overtime.

All Photos by Andrew Millbrooke The Clackamas Print

Basketball: Cougar women roll to 15th straight victory

The Clackamas women's basketball team continued its recent success with two victories over division opponents to stretch their winning streak to 15 games. The Cougars (20-3, 10-0) are undefeated in Southern Division play as they come down the home stretch of the regular season. The Cougars face Mt. Hood tonight at 5:30 p.m. at home.

The Cougar men split two games last week to stay alive in the Southern Division playoff race. After blowing a five point lead to Chemeketa last Wednesday at home to lose 87-82, Clackamas earned a narrow one-point victory at Linn Benton on Saturday, 77-76.

Clackamas (12-12, 4-6) is just one game behind Portland CC (5-5) and Mt. Hood CC (5-5) for

the fourth and final NWAACC playoff spot. The Cougars have a chance to gain some ground as they face Mt. Hood tonight at home and PCC next Wednesday in Randall gym at 7:30 p.m.

Get out and support your Cougars while you can.

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Sports CALENDAR February 13-19

WEDNESDAY - 2/13

- **Cougar Basketball:** Mt. Hood @CCC Women - 5:30 p.m. Men - 7:30 p.m.
- **NBA:** Portland at New Orleans 5 p.m., CSN

THURSDAY - 2/14

- **CBB:** So. Utah at Portland State 7:30 p.m.
- **Randall Fitness Center:** Noon - 8 p.m. downstairs in Randall Hall

FRIDAY - 2/15

- **Hockey:** Tri-City at Portland, 7 p.m. Root, (860 AM)
- **Randall Fitness Center:** 8:30-10 a.m. and 1-5 p.m.

SATURDAY - 2/16

- **Cougar Basketball:** At Lane, Eugene Women - 2 p.m. Men - 4 p.m.
- **Hockey:** Vancouver at Portland, 3 p.m. (1550 AM)

SUNDAY - 2/17

- **MLS:** San Jose at Portland, 5 p.m. (750 AM)

MONDAY - 2/18

- **Randall Fitness Center:** 8:30-10 a.m. and 1-6 p.m.
- **Randall Fitness Center:** Noon - 8 p.m. downstairs in Randall Hall
- **Intramural Basketball:** Noon - 1 p.m. in Randall gym