

Wrestling not pinned by I.O.C. decision



A.M. SPORTS

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Sports Editor

"People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defenses, or the problems of modern society."

— Vince Lombardi

For wrestling fans everywhere in this country, it was a major blow. It was unexpected and below the belt, too. Two weeks ago, the executive board of the International Olympic Committee voted to eliminate wrestling from the Summer Games, beginning in 2020.

Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling will still be contested at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, but both will be dropped from the 2020 games. The sport could still win an appeal at the I.O.C. board meeting in May, with a final decision set for this September.

I hope the board reconsiders and looks to the past before making what seems like an arbitrary decision based solely on money. Wrestling does not draw the crowds that other sports do and is being trashed, without looking at its rich history.

Wrestling is one of the most ancient sports, depicted in cave paintings in France from 15,000 years ago. It is one of the original Olympic sports, added with boxing in 708 B.C. It also was the final event of the pentathlon, a five event contest which included the stadium, long jump, javelin throw, and discus throw. Wrestling has been contested at every modern Olympic Games since 1904.

Simply put, wrestling is a big part of the history of sport. It is one of the most basic forms of exercise and strength building. It is one of the best ways for growing boys to learn about their bodies and to exert that invisible and boundless physical energy that lies inside.

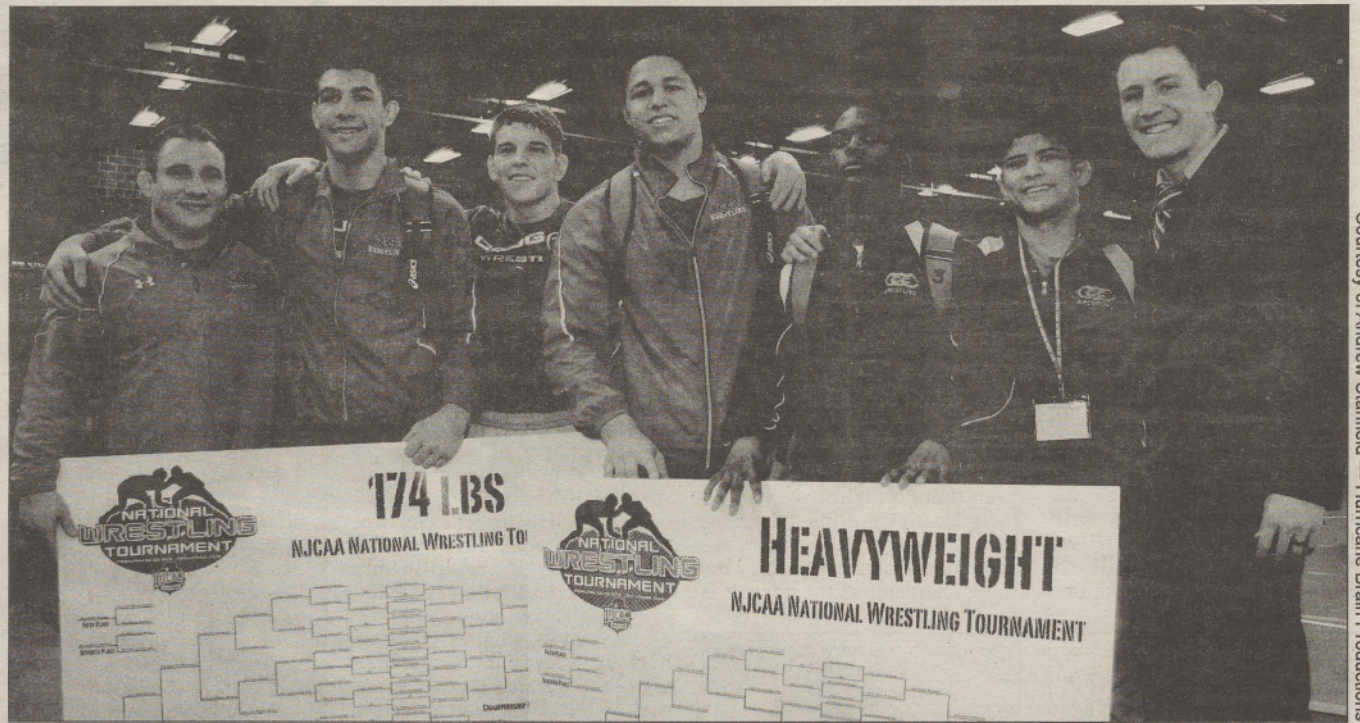
Growing up with two brothers and an athletic father who was a coach, wrestling is how we learned to compete. When my brothers and I got tired of beating on each other, we could always team up and try to take down Dad, although it never worked.

The announcement was certainly a blow to the wrestling community in our state. Oregon has a rich history of wrestling. An Oregonian won one of the most famous matches in history. Canby's Larry Owings, wrestling for the University of Washington, beat Iowa State's legendary Dan Gable, 13-11, in the NCAA finals at 142 pounds in 1970. It was Gable's first and only career loss. He finished with a 182-1 career record in high school and college. Gable went on to win a gold medal in freestyle wrestling at the 1972 Olympics and then, as a head coach, he led the University of Iowa to 16 NCAA team titles from 1976-1997. Gable credits much of his success in the Olympics and as a coach to that one defeat.

I have a feeling that wrestlers everywhere will band together and push the I.O.C. to reverse course and re-instate both forms of international wrestling to the Olympic schedule. This is not just one loss for the most famous wrestler of all-time; it is a gigantic loss for the entire sport.

Wrestlers are fighters. They have a huge worldwide support system. They will fight this ruling hard, and I mean hard. In the end they will win. I'm just glad to be in their corner.

Cougars perform triumphantly at Nationals



Champions Trent Noon and Jacob Mitchell display their individual first place awards at the NJCAA Wrestling Tournament. From left to right: Assistant Coach Rich Vigorito, Trent Noon, Beau Roberts, Jacob Mitchell, AJ Palmer, Sage Ornelas and head coach Josh Rhoden. Clackamas took 3rd overall.

David Beasley
Associate Sports Editor

Facing fierce competition in Des Moines, Iowa last weekend, eight Clackamas wrestlers battled for national recognition at the Richard O. Jacobson Exhibition Center for this year's NJCAA Championship. It was an impressive campaign against savvy opponents.

“

We had three finalists, which is the best in school history.”

Beau Roberts
2nd place 149 lb division

Five All-Americans surfaced from the aftermath of the strife: Sage Ornelas, C.J. Palmer, Roberts, Trent Noon and Jacob Mitchell. The five dominant wrestlers added to Josh Rhoden's competitive coaching resume of 35 All-Americans over seven years.

Finishing third overall as a team, the Cougars maintained their reputation as a top tier team. The road to team success and individual victories was a game of patience and attrition. Ranked fourth going into the tournament, Clackamas rallied a powerful team performance.

All eight wrestlers racked up points throughout the weekend. Steve Conn, Jacob Laden and A.J. Ballard were knocked out early, but still earned team points. Sage Ornelas secured his All-American title by placing sixth in the 125 pound division; he earned nine points for the team. Despite injuries and illness, C.J. Palmer joined the top ranks with a fourth place finish in the 133 pound division.

“Palmer did very well. He got tonsillitis Thursday and still

competed, he's really mentally tough,” said Rhoden.

Palmer battled through shoulder injuries as well, earning 17 team points.

Beau Roberts displayed the tenacity of Clackamas wrestlers. He bested four opponents on his way to the finals.

“It was a real good experience, a lot of good competition and tough wrestlers,” said Roberts. “I knew I had to get in there and battle. I was ranked amongst the top kids that were in my weight class and I knew it was going to be tough all the way through.”

The championship match in the 149 pound division pitted Roberts against Josh Tardy of Harper College. Roberts initiated the action with a takedown after a measured feeling out process. Roberts had a one point lead at the end of the first round.

Beginning round two, Roberts secured a two point takedown, but Tardy scrambled to bring his score up to five quickly. With Tardy leading 5-4, Roberts regained momentum with a reversal, garnering a 6-5 lead at the end of round two.

Round three began methodically with back and forth hand fighting. Tardy was awarded a point for Roberts going out of bounds. Gaining advantage over Roberts, Tardy finished the match with two more points.

“He just hesitated a little bit, gave up a takedown, came back and got an escape. It was a good match but a tough loss,” said Rhoden. Roberts lost 7-6, but nabbed second place in the 149 pound division, earning All-American honors and 18 team points.

“Losing at the end was real tough,” said Roberts. “I wanted it so bad. It's almost worse having it right there in your grasp. The one thing that is good about it is it keeps me hungry.”

Trent Noon blazed through the 174 pound division, pinning three out of four opponents on his way to the final match.

“The first round and a half of the semis was toughest. Midway through the second round the other guy got tired and broke so I put him on his back and pinned him,” said Noon. “He had the first takedown, besides the quarters and finals the other guys got the first takedowns.”

Noon had no trouble securing a two point takedown in the final match against Chase Menendez. Menendez grabbed a high single leg, but Noon demonstrated impeccable balance and flexibility defending the takedown attempt.

Menendez tried for more takedowns and was routinely shut down throughout the match. With a considerable amount of standing wrestling, the match was calculated and defensive. Noon snatched a couple impressive two point takedowns during round three and won 9-5 in a dominating display.

Noon achieved his year-long goal of becoming national champion at 174 pounds, while also accruing 26 points for the team.

“I knew that I could do it,” said Noon. “I didn't think about it, took it one match at a time. I didn't even look at the bracket.”

Jacob Mitchell ended the Cougars run through the competition at 285 pounds versus Yaseen Mudassar of Nassau Community College. Mitchell used his height advantage against the shorter,

stockier Mudassar, avoiding takedowns and controlling distance.

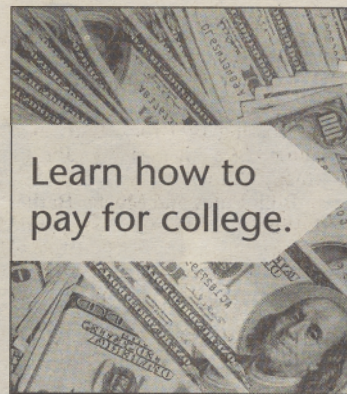
The two behemoths locked arms, vying for head control. The match was a clinic of defense and exhibition of strength by Mitchell. With 15 seconds remaining, Mitchell pitched a two-point takedown and won 3-2, to become the heavyweight national champion. Mitchell contributed 23 team points, edging Clackamas into third place with 97.5 points.

The Cougars were satisfied in the end with another solid placing at nationals. It is the third straight year that Clackamas has finished in the top four nationally as a team.

“The week went good. Three of us were in the finals and two of us won,” said Mitchell. “It was fun. All that hard work paid off.”

“Our team stepped up at the end and everyone did their part,” added Roberts. “As a team I feel like we really came together, third place was really gratifying.”

Complete event results are available at: www.trackwrestling.com.



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