

Are you ready for some wrestling?

story and photo by Brandon Minnis

"When your body says, 'Screw you,' you say, 'Screw you' back!" These are the words of encouragement Coach Josh Rhoden believes at his athletes during the conditioning circuit of wrestling practice.

Despite putting on performances they weren't entirely happy with at the West Region Championship tournament, all 10 of the Cougar wrestlers qualified for the NJCAA National Wrestling Championship tournament in Des Moines, Iowa. This is an impressive feat considering that many schools don't qualify a single athlete.

Come Feb. 27 and 28, the Clackamas Community College squad will be taking on the best community college wrestlers from across the country. Upwards of 40 schools will have athletes present, with each wrestler competing in up to five bouts over the course of the meet.

For these athletes, one thing is clear: wrestling

isn't just a sport, it's a lifestyle.

"Football players can go have cheeseburgers, eat fast food," said wrestler Adrian Salas. "But wrestling, if you're cutting the weight you gotta buckle down. It's not good for you or your body to eat unhealthy. Everything shows on the mat once you start wrestling. That food won't work in your body. You have to eat right, make the right decisions."

Salas won the California Division 1 Athlete of the Year title his senior year of high school for his exceptional performance in both football and wrestling before deciding to come to Clackamas last year.

Each wrestler has a designated weight class they compete at and the day of the match you aren't allowed to be over that weight. That means that all season wrestlers are watching everything they put in their bodies, running several miles every day to shed

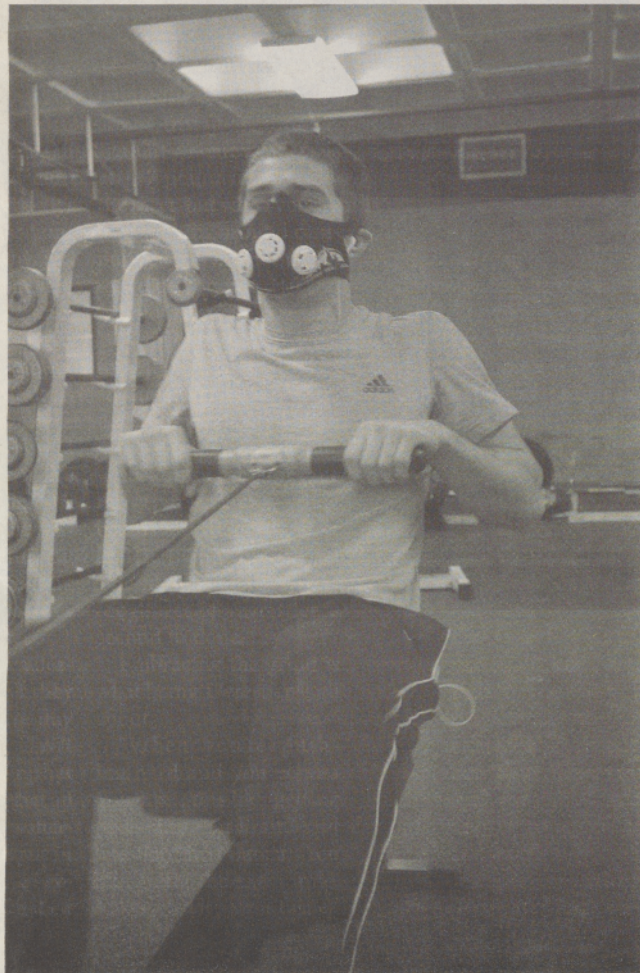
the pounds, even sweating out the final 5-10 pounds of water weight in a sauna before the weigh in.

For instance, Ihoghama Odighizuwa wrestles at 197 pounds the day of the meet, but when you see him walking around campus you can count on him to weigh between 210 and 220 pounds.

After the battle with weight, a wrestler still has an opponent he has to go out and physically battle; it's a constant grind. The willingness to embrace the grind is why wrestling breeds a different kind of athlete than other sports. The mental and physical toughness of a wrestler is second to none.

Embracing the grind is what being a wrestler is all about.

"When you're pushing hard and you wanna give up... You like getting pushed to that limit," said wrestler Chris Garcia. "You like going the extra mile. That's what it means to me."

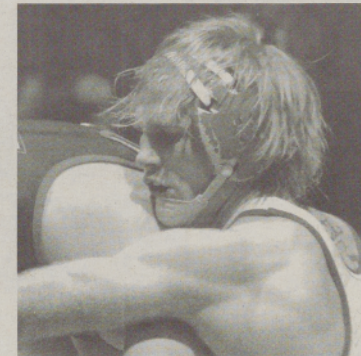


Robbie Rizzolino trains for Nationals with a mask designed to increase respiratory efficiency.

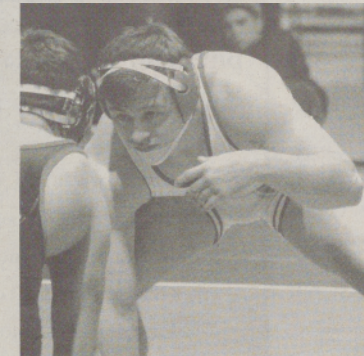
Qualified Cougars: All 10 head to Nationals



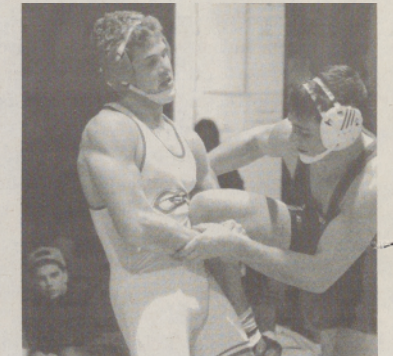
Robbie Rizzolino, 141, 1st place in West Region



Dylan Reel, 174, 1st place in West Region



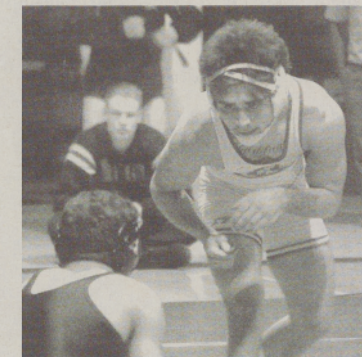
Adrian Salas, 184, 1st place in West Region



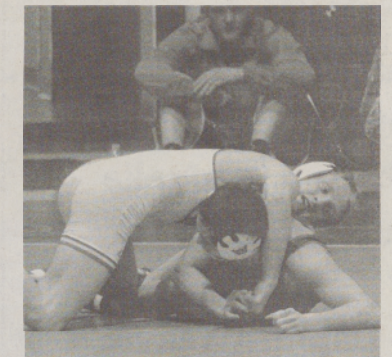
Eleazar DeLuca, 157, 1st place in West Region



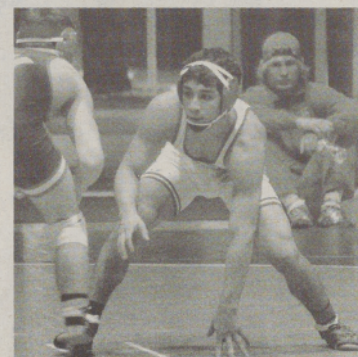
Kyle Bateman, 165, 2nd place in West Region



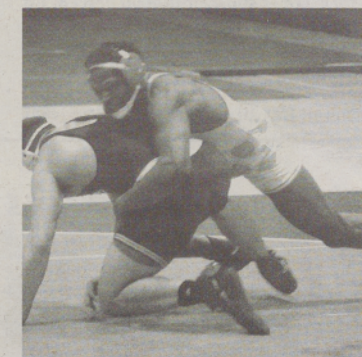
Lawrence Otero, 133, 2nd place in West Region



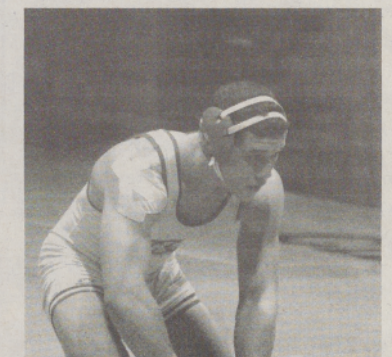
Korbin Levin, 125, 3rd place in West Region



Chris Garcia, 149, 3rd place in West Region



Ihoghama Odighizuwa, 197, 4th place in West Region



John Morin, 285, 4th place in West Region

photos by Andrew Stanfield - Hurricane Brain Productions