

At left, Chuck Kearney works to get an escape in a match with Mike Connor of Forest Grove. Above, and at right, he works for falls in earlier rounds of the state tournament.



Wrestlers 6th at state; Kearney wins title

by SCOTT NEWTON

Imagine that it's March, 1981. Two juniors, Dan Martin and Chris Jones, have only recently won state championships.

A sophomore, Larry Toppliff, won a bronze. Later, a fourth potential 1982 state champion moves into the district, Chuck Kearney.

Yes, 1982 looked to be the year of the AAA state champion Sandy Pioneers. Sounds good, doesn't it? Instead, of course, it turned out to be The Season of Adversity.

This fall Chris Jones ended up fighting a much more important battle, one for his life.

Analysis

Even without Jones, Coach Ron Calhoun had hopes of finishing in the top three.

After all, he had a supporting cast that included the likes of Cal McKinnis, Tim Systma and Randy Carmony.

Sophomore Loren Bateman was the only Sandy wrestler to lose in the first round of the state tournament this weekend. Calhoun was just glad to have him there. He didn't wrestle a varsity match during the regular season, and he was wrestling up a weight class.

Toppliff, Martin, Kearney, McKinnis, Carmony and Systma all advanced first round, but already things

were going badly.

Martin had sprained his shoulder in the first 30 seconds of his match. He held on, though, and in the final half minute of his match he scored on an escape, and then a takedown, for a 3-0 win.

Martin's shoulder was packed in ice Thursday night, and in hot pads the next morning, before the second round.

The strategy that worked Thursday night didn't work Friday.

Martin tried to hang on in his match against Dennis Moore of Crescent Valley. He tried to score his points in the third period, and was coming close to doing it, but the referee stopped the match, saying Martin was in a potentially dangerous hold.

It was a bad break for the returning state champion. With 11 seconds remaining in the match he didn't have time to get into scoring position again, and lost 3-2.

Carmony's season also ended Friday afternoon. He lost 10-1 to the eventual 191-pound state champion, Oscar Hicks of Benson.

Also lost second round was McKinnis, who fell 10-2 in overtime.

Kearney, Systma and Toppliff all won second round, and again in the quarterfinals.

Saturday afternoon, in the semifinals, Toppliff lost 7-3 to Doug Minton of Hermiston, the eventual state champion.

Systma lost 4-2 to Bob Starr of Clackamas, who ended up second.

Kearney's semifinal match was one of the most talked about. Many were upset, first of all, that the 1981 state champion from Montana, Mike Connor of Forest Grove, wasn't seeded.

Only the state finishers from last year's tournament were seeded. No account of the current season was taken into consideration.

Secondly, some felt that Connors should have been disqualified earlier in the tournament as he injured another wrestler with an illegal move.

Regardless, the much-awaited semifinal showdown finally took place. There were three disputed calls, the most important of which occurred in the second period.

Kearney received two points for a takedown, and two points for a near-fall, when he threw Connors to his back on the edge of the mat.

Some felt they were out-of-bounds when Kearney got the move completed. Others felt that had the mat been a little larger Kearney would have pinned the former state champion right there.

Kearney went on to win 4-3.

"I thought they called it just right," said Calhoun.

The bubble never burst for Kearney. He went on to win the state title pinning his opponent in the finals in 40 seconds with a common half nelson.

There are some who say that the easy going junior in high school is pressured by his father, Chuck Kearney Sr., an assistant coach.

But to see the younger Kearney in action is to dispel that myth. His aggressiveness shows, and there isn't

much chance he'd trade in his 31-0 record, his win over Connors, or his state championship.

Systma went on to finish fifth, beating Jackson's Paul Corbin, a 320-pound heavyweight, a second time.

Toppliff re-pulled a hamstring muscle in the wrestle-backs (he pulled it in practice two weeks ago), after the semifinal round, and had to forfeit twice, settling for sixth.

It was an interesting crew of wrestlers and coaches that played out the scenes this year. There's Kearney, with his wealth of knowledge about the sport. There was Mark Mullins, the chiropractor and former NCAA champion.

There was Tyler Smith, who moved here from Oklahoma in the last year. He likes liver and onions, and says he's going to be a chiropractor, like Mullins, when he grows up.

Finally, there's Louie Coy, another likable type. And then there's Calhoun. He was businesslike during the tournament, but as personable as ever after it was over.

Still, he seemed a little down Monday. For most coaches, a sixth-place finish at state would be fine.

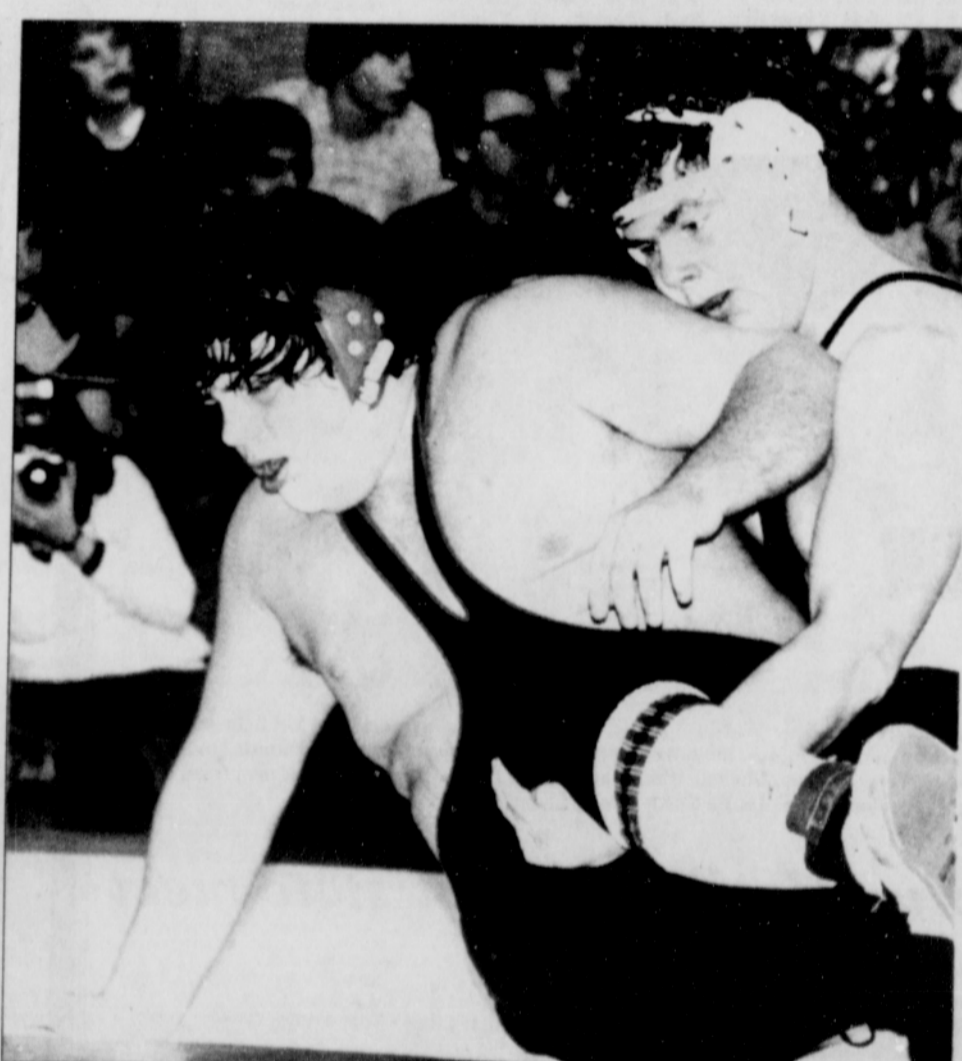
For Calhoun, it was a letdown.

Like Dan Martin, most of us will never know the thrill of winning a state title, or the pain that goes with being dethroned.

But, they went down fighting. They all know that, and that's all that matters.



Top left: Ron Calhoun and Louie Coy watch a match. Bottom left: Larry Toppliff. Above: Cal McKinnis works over his first-round opponent. Right: Tim Systma wrestles 320-pound heavyweight Paul Corbin of Jackson.



Ski team wins 'ugly' Mt. Hood Championship trophy

There's nothing like going out with a win.

The Sandy boys didn't qualify for the state meet this year, but they put everything they had into the Mt. Hood Championships, and came away with the traveling trophy.

"It's got to be one of the ugliest trophies I've ever seen, but I enjoy having it," Coach Robert Karsten said.

Sue Sarich, a junior, won the girls division with a time of 54.0.

Her brother Steve, a freshman, tied for first in the boys division with a time of 41.7. He tied with Scott Ware of Lake Oswego.

The Sandy girls had a combined

time (from the top three skiers) of 2:45.1, winning the girls division over St. Mary's (2:47.6) and Hood River (2:50.7).

The Pioneers took third in the boys division with a 2:11.4. Hood River finished ahead of Sandy by a second. Lake Oswego was second with a time of 2:11.2.

Junior Chris Welch was 13th with a time of 44.3. Junior Mike Wall was 26th with a time of 45.3.

Steve Sarich skied very well, Karsten said. He was the second skier out of the chute for Sandy, and was somewhere in the 40s. Senior Robert Spradling was the first Sandy skier out, and was in the 20s. The

course was packed down a little better by the time Sarich made his run in the giant slalom.

Spradling got a ski caught making a corner and took a fall, but finished.

Karsten said that Spradling is a good athlete and a hard worker, and said that he would have like to have seen him get a little more recognition.

Both Welch and Wall had good outings, Karsten said. Wall was only one second behind Welch, which illustrates how tight the race was, Karsten pointed out.

Although Erik Marter and Brian Silvey, both freshmen, didn't finish in the top three, they turned in times of 45.7 and 47.3, respectively.

"We've been training with this race in mind, and it paid off," Karsten said.

The Sandy mentor was also pleased with the girls team.

About Sarich, he said, "She had a pretty fair run. I believe she can ski better."

"I think she'll do better at state." She ran into a little soft snow, and turned late and slid a little on a couple of gates, although she obviously hit most of them right.

Sophomore Ulla Pearson tied for second with Sara Neidermeyer of St. Mary's. Both girls finished in 54.1.

Sophomore Charr Bridge finished in the top 10 with a time of 57.0.

She did well, skiing against tough competition on new skis, Karsten said.

Other finishers include junior Ingrid Peterson, senior Kris Van Steenis and freshman Nicole Schouten.

"I was real happy with the whole team," Karsten said.

Karsten is hoping for another good weekend for the girls. They'll compete in the slalom on Thursday at Mulptop, and the giant slalom on Friday at Ski Bowl. The giant slalom will run from the top of upper bowl to the bottom of lower bowl, which is a long course, according to Karsten.

He said that the girls chances of repeating as state champions are

"quite good."

Junior Anne Sarich, who was competing for the Sky Liners Club Cup in Bend this weekend, will be with the team at state.

Twenty-two teams, including teams from the Valley, Wilco and Metro League, competed Saturday in the Mt. Hood Championships on the upper Magic Mile at Timberline.

In the past 11 years, Hood River has won the title nine times.

"I hate to put it this way, but this is a building year," Karsten said. "Next year I believe we'll have one of the strongest teams in the state."

We will be winning the Mt. Hood Championship again, Karsten said. "I like that trophy."