

SPORTS

Local Athlete Excels at Clackamas

Earns full ride scholarship to Oregon State

BY CLIFF PFENNING
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Tarrence Williams is finally ready to wrestle in Corvallis. It only took a couple years and some regular whoopings by his college coach to get him motivated enough to compete for a nationally-ranked NCAA Div. I program.

When Williams graduated from Jefferson High School in north Portland, he earned marks as been a three-time state finalist, and a state champion at 135 pounds as a junior. But he left as a football player, which he played in fall and was an all-state selection. He wrestled largely because his father, Damon, coached the sport at the youth level.

The Oregon State Beavers, Tarrence Williams says, would have taken him into its wrestling program, but he didn't feel ready for the Pac-10 or being a wrestler full-time, so his Portland wrestling club coach Roy



Tarrence Williams excels on the Clackamas Community College wrestling team. The Jefferson High School graduate is headed to Oregon State with a full-ride scholarship.

Pittman directed him to Clackamas Community College, where coach Josh Rhoden gladly took him in.

Rhoden gave him a scholarship, too, enough to pay for books.

"We could see he had a lot of potential, but we weren't really sure what he was going to do here, how committed he was going to be," Rhoden says. "We have a very lim-

ited number of scholarships, so we figured we'd start there."

It turned into a good move.

During his freshman year at the Oregon City school, Williams began developing into the wrestler his potential had shown. The Internet and Rhoden, he says, helped redirect his passion from football to wrestling.

As a senior at Jefferson, Williams

says he started to see his name pop up as a top prospect among college recruits – in wrestling, not football.

"I really liked that," he says. "I liked that it focused on me. I started to realize that I'm really an individual as an athlete, and not so much of a team player who has to rely on other guys for success."

Rhoden, 30, who wrestled at Crook County High School, took Williams to tournaments and clinics around the state, and the two practiced against one another.

Rhoden, usually won.

"I beat him 8-0 one time," says Rhoden, who is roughly the same size as Williams. "That really stuck with him and you could see that he wanted to improve so that didn't happen again."

"I can still beat him, but he can beat me, too."

As a freshman, Williams finished won the West Region championship and finished fifth at the national meet. By then, he had convinced Rhoden he should have a full scholarship.

In fall, Williams signed a letter of intent to wrestle at Oregon State,

which he chose over Oklahoma State. He's been ranked No. 1 at 171 pounds for most of the season, and is 23-2 following a win Thursday.

"It's like a light went on," Rhoden says, "especially after he signed with Oregon State."

"Tarrence is one of those guys we watched when he was in high school," OSU coach Jim Zalesky said in a press release after Williams signed his letter of intent. "He's done well at Clackamas and is in a weight class we need. We feel that he can come in and contribute right away."

Oregon State has been ranked 15th or higher all season.

With a slew of nationally-ranked wrestlers in their lineup, Clackamas is ranked No. 1 as it prepares for the West Region tournament, Saturday, Feb. 12. Lakeridge grad Tyrell Fortune, who is also headed for Oregon State, is ranked No. 1 at 285 pounds.

The national meet is Feb. 25-26 in Spokane.

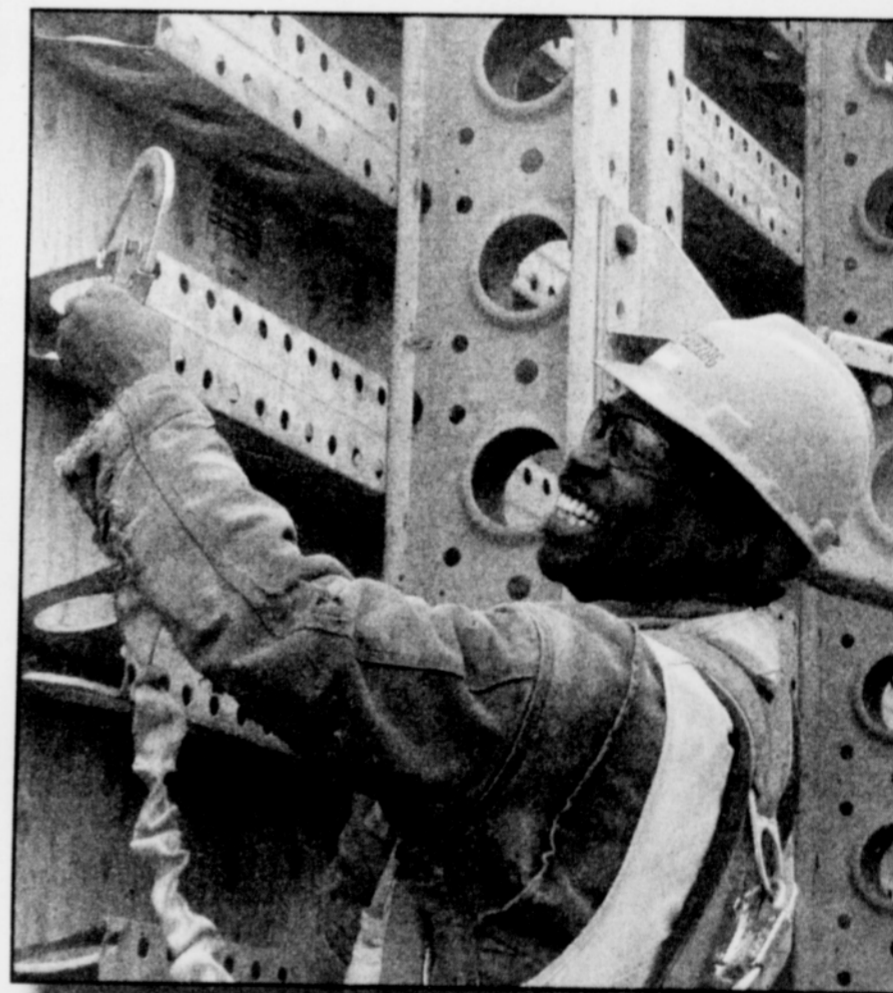
Williams says he's excited about the upcoming tournaments and his future at OSU, where he plans to study biology.

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