

Former Trojan still scoring points

By Kyle Klingman
W.I.N. Editor

Daniel Cormier promised more offense this time around and, fortunately for everyone, he delivered. That's because at this year's U.S. Nationals in April, Cormier defeated Mo Lawal — a friend and former teammate who moved up from the 185 pound division — in a 1-0, 1-0 yawn-fest that went to the clinch in both periods.

Cormier is a former Colby Community College wrestler. He won national championships in 1998 and 1999 at Colby before transferring to Oklahoma State University. The stage was set for a rematch when Lawal won the Challenge Tournament, earning the right to face Cormier who received an automatic bid to the finals.

However, for the first 1:46 of the first period it looked like those in attendance might be lulled to sleep again with another battle of attrition.

But that all changed when Lawal hit an electrifying shot and scored the first point of the match on a pushout.

"That lit a fire under me," said Cormier. "Mo set the stage and it was going to be a battle. It was a battle. I'm not going to go the clinch. It was 0-0 late in the period so Mo went 'Daniel, this isn't going to go clinch, clinch' and got a point and set the tone. I knew I was going to have to step up if I was going to be able to compete with him."

With eight seconds to go in the period, Cormier scored two points on a body lock, making good on his

promise of more offense. He won the period, 2-1, and never let Lawal back in the match. He won the second period 1-0 to get the victory. In the second match he did the same, winning 1-0, 1-0 to make his fifth consecutive World Team.

Yet, the Cormier who stepped on at this year's World Team Trials was different from years past. Struggling with his weight at times, the former Oklahoma State All-American wasn't sure he wanted to stay with wrestling through another Olympic cycle.

Competing at the 264.5-pound division in a tournament earlier this year, Cormier took it upon himself to keep his weight at 227 instead of 235 during competitions. And it was apparent during his two-match series with Lawal that Cormier was hitting his shots as quickly and as cleanly as he has in several years.

"He's not lazy," said Cormier's coach John Smith, who also mentored Cormier at Oklahoma State. "He's far from lazy. He just likes to eat. He comes from Louisiana and he likes spicy food and he likes to eat a lot of it."

"He did a good job over the last three months. He's worked a little bit harder and he has more direction. His work translated to the mat. It's the best I've seen him wrestle in about three years."

Cormier hopes to wrestle better in three months when he attempts to win his first medal at the World Championships.

• *This article was originally printed in Wrestling International Newsmagazine (W.I.N.). June 22. Colby Free Press contributed to this story.*

Daniel Cormier, top, has allowed just one point to Mo Lawal in their three matches at the U.S. Nationals and U.S. Team trials in Las Vegas.

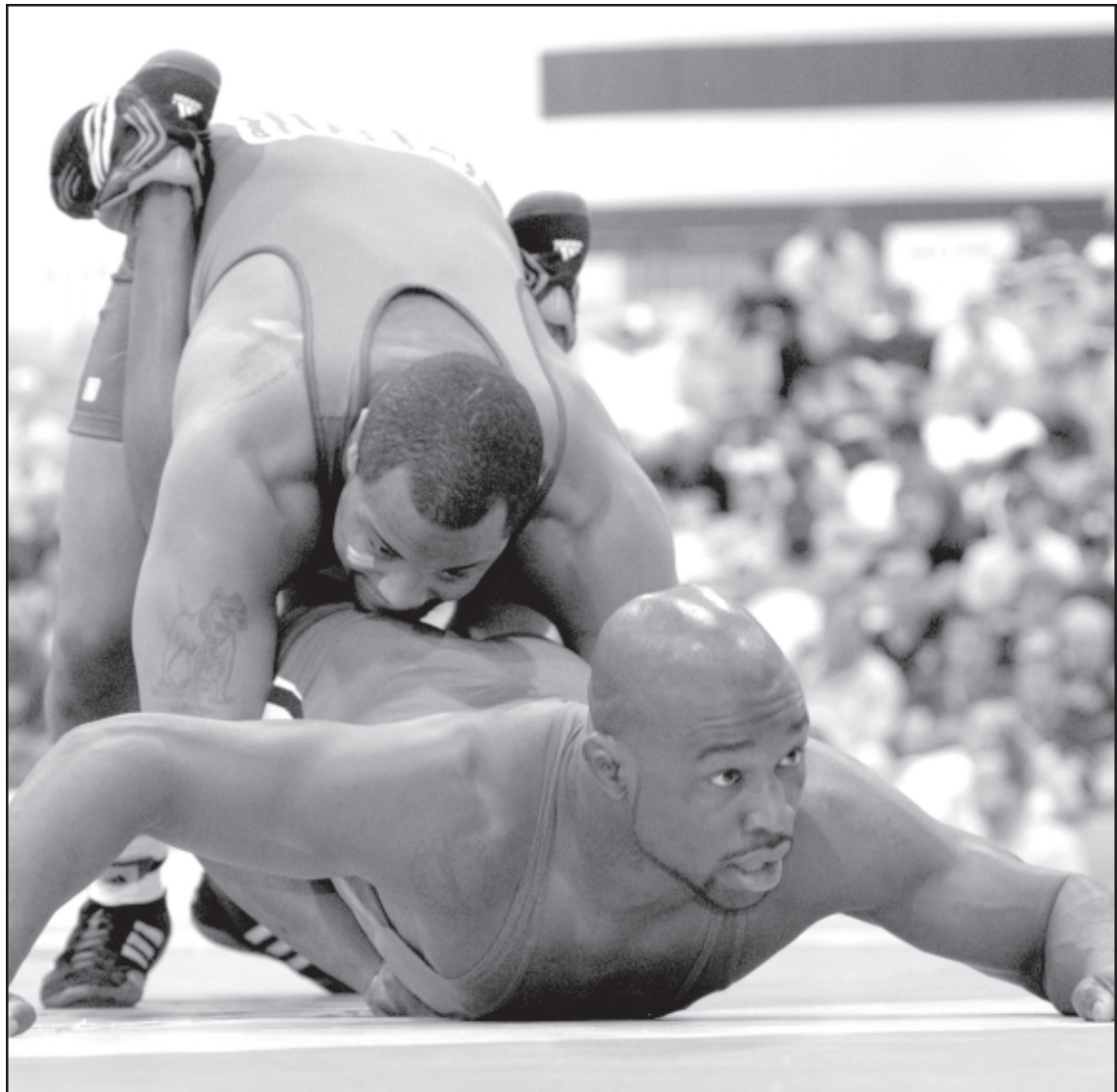


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SportsBriefs

PRO BASKETBALL
NEW YORK (AP) — The Portland Trail Blazers ended months of debate when they chose Greg Oden over fellow college freshman Kevin Durant with the No. 1 pick in a highly anticipated NBA draft.

Portland opted for the 7-footer who can dominate a game with his defense over the sensational scoring of Durant, who would have been the No. 1 pick in many other years after one of the most outstanding freshman seasons in NCAA history.

Moments after he was picked, Durant saw on TV that the SuperSonics had traded Ray Allen, their leading scorer, to Boston. Fans booed the Allen trade at a draft party for the Sonics, who still face losing Rashard Lewis to free agency.

Portland also made a deal, clearing room in the middle for Oden by trading Zach Randolph to New York. The Blazers also sent Fred Jones and Dan Dickau to the Knicks for Steve Francis and Channing Frye.

The only other trade involving an NBA player came when Golden State sent Jason Richardson and the rights to Jermareo Davidson, the No. 36 pick, to Charlotte for Brandon Wright, taken at No. 8 by the Bobcats.

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Frank Thomas hit his 500th home run, routinely putting his head down as he rounded the bases while joining one of baseball's most elite clubs.

The Toronto slugger became the 21st major leaguer to reach the career mark, a milestone that has usually meant an eventual spot in the Hall of Fame.

Thomas hit a three-run shot in the first inning, connecting against

Minnesota's Carlos Silva and sending a 1-2 pitch an estimated 396 feet into the left-field stands.

HOUSTON (AP) — Craig Biggio became the 27th player in major league history to get 3,000 hits in Houston's 8-5 11-inning victory over Colorado.

Biggio singled to center field in the seventh inning for the milestone hit and was thrown out trying to stretch the play into a double. The 41-year-old finished 5-for-6 with an RBI and a run scored. Biggio is the first player in two seasons to reach 3,000 hits. Rafael Palmeiro reached it on July 15, 2005, with Baltimore.

TENNIS
WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Roger Federer won his 50th straight match on grass, beating 18-year-old Juan Martin del Potro of Argentina 6-2, 7-5, 6-1 to reach the third round at Wimbledon.

Federer, trying to become only the second man in the Open era to win five straight titles at the All England Club, will next face two-time Grand Slam champion Marat Safin. The Russian beat Aisam-Ul-Haq Qureshi of Pakistan 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 (4).

Other winners included No. 2 Rafael Nadal, No. 4 Novak Djokovic, No. 9 James Blake, 2002 champion Lleyton Hewitt and unseeded Wayne Arthurs, who at 36 is the oldest competitor.

Defending champion Amelie Mauresmo, 2004 champion Maria Sharapova and three-time champion Venus Williams all won in straight sets.

TORONTO (AP) — Mark Messier, the NHL's second-leading career scorer, highlights the newest class of the Hockey Hall of Fame.

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