

Intermat Wrestling

Please Note this feature story on National Wrestling Website:

Andrew Hips of www.intermatwrestle.com has done a feature article of transfer athlete Ryland Geiger. It is the feature today on the website and can be found by using the link above. Geiger, a native of Scappoose, Oregon joined the Cougars this fall as a transfer athlete from the University of Minnesota.

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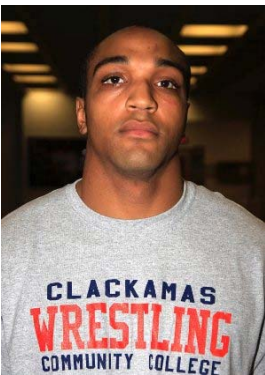
Ryland Geiger was expected to make an immediate impact for the Minnesota Gophers, but his career took a detour. Now he wants to get back to Division I.

Geiger looking to get back to Division I wrestling

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When news surfaced in September that Ryland Geiger was leaving the University of Minnesota, it was more than just a small blip on the radar for the Gopher faithful.



Ryland Geiger (Photo/Tracy Swisher/Clackamas CC)

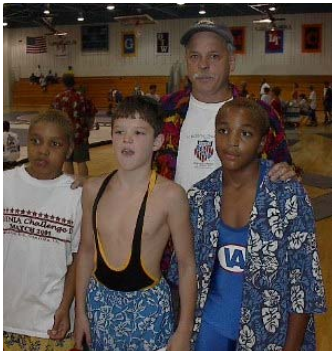
The 19-year-old Geiger, who was one of the nation's top recruits from the Class of 2008, was expected to make an immediate impact at 197 pounds for a young

and talented Gopher team looking to get back to the top of the college wrestling world after coming off its worst NCAA finish (14th) since 1996.

Great expectations had been placed on the broad shoulders of Geiger after a prep career that saw him capture **two Oregon (OSAA) state titles** and win titles at prestigious high school events such as NHSCA Nationals, Cadet Nationals, and Junior Nationals. **He was ranked No. 1 in the country at 189 pounds by InterMat.**

Last season, as a redshirt for the Gophers, Geiger compiled a 19-3 record while competing in open tournaments. In the spring, Geiger won both the FILA Junior Nationals and FILA World Team Trials in freestyle to earn a spot on the Junior World Team. Geiger, though, chose not to compete at the Junior World Championships in Ankara, Turkey in August, and instead opted to stay in Minneapolis and focus on his summer term courses at Minnesota.

Toward the end of summer, Geiger made the **decision to leave Minnesota and head back home to wrestle at Clackamas Community College in Oregon.** He says it was "a little bit of everything" that caused him to leave Minnesota, but "mostly academics."



Ryland Geiger (far right) along with childhood friends Jayk Cobbs and Jared King of Great Bridge Middle School after the three won titles at the 2002 Virginia Challenge Summer Sizzler. Cobbs currently wrestles for Duquesne, King at Notre Dame College, and Geiger at Clackamas (Photo/Jason Bryant)

"Everybody is going to be a little bitter that I left Minnesota," said Geiger. "I'm bitter. They're bitter. It sucks that I had to leave, but I'm pretty sure we ended things on a good note."

Geiger's journey over the past 10 years could be best described as nomadic. His father, David, is in the military. Geiger grew up in Virginia, moved to Korea in middle school, spent his freshman year in the Philippines, moved back to the U.S. for his sophomore year and attended Blair Academy in New Jersey, and then moved to Oregon for his final two years of high school.

In high school, Geiger was recruited by many of the nation's top college wrestling

programs. He chose Minnesota over Lehigh, Arizona State, and Oregon State because of the combination of coaches, workout partners, facilities, and the fact that his best friend from his days at Blair Academy, Mario Mason, was also going to be wrestling for the Gophers.

Then-Minnesota head assistant coach Marty Morgan played a key role in recruiting Geiger to Minnesota. Geiger expected Morgan to not only be one of his coaches, but also serve as a key training partner throughout his college wrestling career. But shortly before the college wrestling season began, Morgan resigned as the head assistant coach of the Gophers to train current UFC heavyweight champion Brock Lesnar.

"I was pretty shocked," said Geiger of Morgan's resignation. "We all had no idea that he was leaving. It was our understanding that he was going to be the coach. It was kind of terrible because he left and he has all that knowledge. It's good for him. I can't be mad at the guy. He's helping out probably the baddest man alive right now."



Ryland Geiger pinned Brandon Jackson at in the Clackamas intrasquad on Thursday night (Photo/Tracy Swisher/Clackamas CC)

Geiger, who roomed with Mason while at Minnesota, says it's a difficult transition going from high school wrestling to Division I college wrestling.

"It's tough," said Geiger. "It's hard on your body, hard on your mind. It's a lot longer season than you expect it to be. You really have to be mentally tough to be able to get through every day."

Last February, Geiger made the 90-mile trek from Minneapolis to Rochester, Minnesota to watch one of his best friends from Oregon, **Tyrell Fortune, compete at the NJCAA Championships for Clackamas**. Geiger and Fortune, who became friends after their sophomore year of high school, were two of the nation's top upper weights from Oregon's Class of 2008.

With Geiger in attendance, Fortune did not disappoint. He went 5-0 with five pins en route to winning the NJCAA title at heavyweight. He also won the Traphagen Award for the most falls in the least amount of time.



Tyrell Fortune pinned Northwest's Landon Harris to win the 2009 NJCAA title at heavyweight. Fortune will redshirt this season (Photo/Johnnie Johnson)

Moments after winning the NJCAA title, Fortune talked about his relationship with Geiger.

"Me and Ryland are like best friends," said Fortune. "We're like brothers. Ever since he came to Oregon he has been my training partner, best friend, and part of my family."

While in Rochester watching Fortune compete, Geiger also spent time with the Clackamas wrestling team and connected with Clackamas coach **Josh Rhoden**.

Ultimately, it was the combination of reuniting with Fortune, coming back home to Oregon, and wrestling for Rhoden that made Clackamas the best fit after leaving Minnesota.

Geiger began summer workouts at Clackamas in August and fall classes in September.

"He's doing well," said Rhoden, who will be entering his fourth season as head coach at Clackamas. "It has been a little bit hectic for him just making the transition from being enrolled and ready to go to school at a different place and then jumping in and getting him some credits that are going to apply towards his associate degree so that he can get out of here as soon as possible. As far as academics go, he's a really intelligent kid. He's going to do well here, I think."



Josh Rhoden

Clackamas is coming off a third-place finish at the NJCAA Championships, which is the program's highest finish since 1989. Rhoden has All-Americans

returning at 184 pounds and 197 pounds, but both wrestlers, Caleb Kociemba and Brett Sanchez, plan to drop down to 174 pounds and 184 pounds respectively, while Geiger is expected to slide in the Cougar lineup at 197 pounds. Fortune will redshirt this season, but will serve as a key training partner for Geiger. Geiger hovers around 205-210 pounds, while Fortune weighs around 230-240 pounds.

So what are Rhoden's expectations for Geiger this season?

"To be realistic for him, at the very least, it has to be to place high at the national championships," said Rhoden, who has coached 14 All-Americans, two finalists, and a national champion in just three seasons. "I know he mentioned that he wants to win a national championship. For him, let's be honest, it's a step down. He's a much more talented kid than most of the guys in our room besides maybe Tyrell and another kid or two. One of the things he said to me when we met early on was, 'I've just never really had to get in that great of shape.' So we put a priority on conditioning. I think it's more about how can we better his future both academically and wrestling-wise so that he can get back to Division I. Because that's where he needs to be."

Geiger's transcripts are in the process of being evaluated. Because of the fact that Geiger enrolled in summer courses the past two years, Rhoden believes there is a very good possibility that he could have his associate degree after next summer's term and be ready to enroll at a four-year school in the fall of 2010.



Ryland Geiger (Photo/Tech-Fall.com)

While Geiger's stay at Clackamas may be brief, there is so shortage of things he hopes to achieve before he moves on.

"I want to get better in every aspect," said Geiger. "I want to be more mentally strong. I want to be in better shape. I want to be better technically. I want to be able to break people. I want to get better and then make everybody on our team better. Hopefully win the national title as a team, too."

As for where he wants to go after Clackamas, he's not sure at this point. He would even consider a return to Minnesota if the door is still open.

"I would consider going back," said Geiger. "I haven't really thought about it too much. I mean, I would like to go back. It's pretty much up to them, I guess."

"It was a tough decision to leave Minnesota. I put myself in a little bit of a hole there. I'm not taking anything away from either program, but you have to go back a little bit to keep going forward."