

# Athletic Department carves wrestling, ladies' golf

## Wrestling tradition meets abrupt end

By Brian Love  
Plainsman Sports Editor

"This was not a sudden decision. This committee has been at work for some time studying the way the athletic department makes and spends money. It has looked into all aspects of the department. No area has escaped review."

With that statement by Athletic Director Pat Dye, women's golf and wrestling were eliminated from the Auburn sports program.

"It was their recommendation that we drop wrestling and women's golf. We hate to take this action, but in our judgment it was the thing to do at this particular time. This is in no way a reflection on the coaches or athletes in those sports. It is a comment on the economic times in which we live."

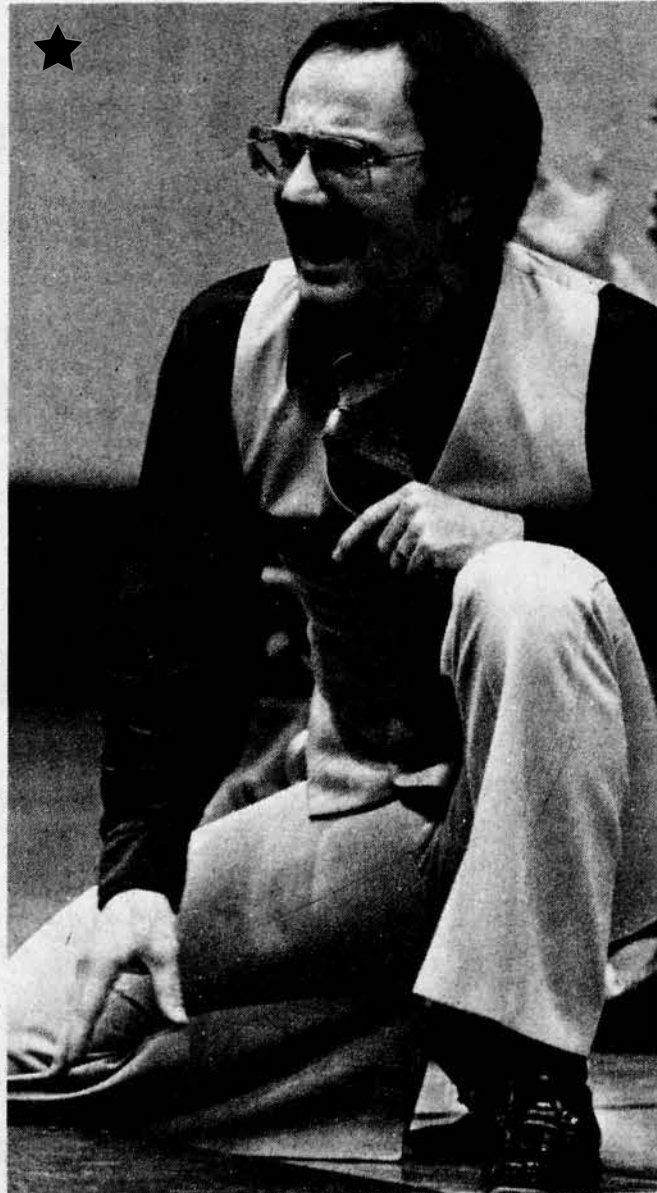
The committee said that there would be a savings of \$130,000 by eliminating the two sports.

"It was strictly a matter of money," said Dr. John Cochran, associate athletic director and a member of the subcommittee that has studied the athletic department since October. "We were faced with eliminating a sport or cutting back scholarships in other non-revenue sports. It was a difficult decision, but someone had to make it sooner or later."

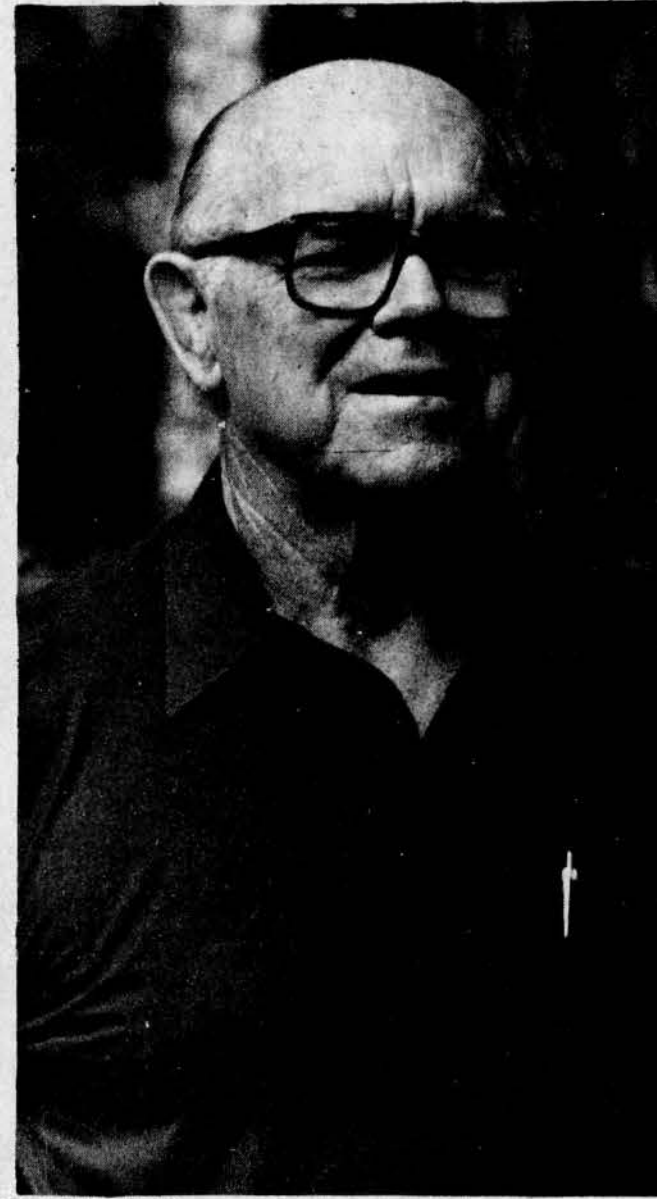
Neither sport had admission fees to bring in revenue. In addition, wrestling was selected since it is the only men's sport that doesn't count toward the Bernie Moore All-Sports Trophy.

Assistant athletic director for women's sports, Joanna Davenport selected women's golf as the sport to be dropped from the women's program.

The women's golf team began in 1972 and two years later finished 12th in the nation. This year the team qualified for the AIWA National Championships but didn't make the final cut.



Photography: Mark Almond



Photography: Sherri Lilly

## Umbach saddened by loss of program

By Brian Love  
Plainsman Sports Editor

When Auburn University dropped its wrestling program last Friday, it probably affected its founder Arnold "Swede" Umbach more than anyone.

"If you worked 29 years then had something like this happen, it's tough," said the legendary coach holding back his tears. "I would like for those people who made this decision to be around these kids when they find out what's happening to them. I saw kids when Alabama dropped, when Georgia dropped."

"Tom told me one broke down and cried."

The ex-Oklahoma resident, using a walk-on program except for his final two years, dominated the sport in the south for his career. His teams won 19 straight Southeastern Invitational Wrestling Association Tournaments from 1946 to 1965.

Umbach's walk-ons included NCAA Tournament fourth-place finishers Carrol Keller, Sonny Dragoin and Dan Matrone and first-place finisher Don McNair, the first wrestler from the South to win a title.

Dragoin, now the Auburn golf coach, showed his respect for his former coach by saying, "I feel disappointed for Mr. Umbach, who spent over half of his life promoting the sport. If every coach in America used his methods and techniques and set examples for the participants as he did then athletics would contribute more to every boy."

Present coach Tom Milkovich also complimented the coach, "Swede Umbach is as good a coach as any that have walked through Auburn University."

One mentioned that Umbach was held with respect nationally that the NCAA tournament was held in Auburn in 1971 despite knowing that the tournament would draw better at some other location.

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MILKOVICH AND UMBACH  
...both coaches hurt by loss

See UMBACH, page 3



# Umbach

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Umbach became interested in the sport when he was 16 years old and attending Oklahoma A and M (now State) on a vocational agriculture scholarship.

"I watched the Oklahoma Aggie wrestlers working out in a gym. I stood there with my mouth watering. There were some preps out there wrestling. Mr. Gallagher, who was the greatest wrestling coach of this century, came over to me and asked if I wanted to come out, and I said, 'Darn right.'"

Following his completion of prep school, he returned to high school where he played football and basketball. A friend convinced him to go to Southern State, a teachers' college in Oklahoma.

Umbach was on the school's first wrestling team which finished in the top three in the nation. He also was the captain of the football team his senior year which won the conference title.

He coached at three different high schools where he started wrestling

programs. He also coached the Oklahoma state football champions in 1931.

In 1942, Umbach came to Auburn with football coach Carl Voyles. Three years later he began his legendary career in which his teams won 249 matches and lost only 28.

"I was here two years as an end coach on the football team. The head of the men's physical education department came open. When I was offered it, I said to Dr. Duncan (then Auburn's president), 'The only

thing I would regret is leaving coaching. I'll make you an offer; I know I can't stay with football since football takes up so much time, so tell you what I'll do. Let me start a wrestling team here.' He said, 'I think that'd be great.'"

His first 25 years were spent without scholarship athletes.

"At the first Southeastern conference tournament, LSU recruited four from Iowa. LSU went into wrestling wholeheartedly. They beat us by five points.

"In 1971, Jeff Beard found they were going to have the national tournament here and gave four scholarships, and we recruited.

"We beat LSU with four scholarships and they had 12. The next year they had 16 and we had eight, and we beat them again for the conference title."

Prior to this, there had been no conference championship but after contacting Beard, the athletic director, and Georgia's Joel Eaves, a former Auburn basketball coach, Umbach was put in charge of organizing it.

His first job was sending out letters to all athletic directors.

"At Ole Miss, the athletic director was an old fellow who was about to retire. He wrote across the top of the questionnaire 'Never.' Oxford is only about 30 miles south of us and they've got all those pro matches.

"The first college match we had here we had a lot of people who came because they thought it was pro. They said to me, 'I've never seen anything like that. I thought it was pro.' I said, 'No, it's real wrestling.'"

Little league baseball was also founded in Alabama by Umbach in the early 1950s after he brought a film to Alabama of the Little League World Series.

Doing things for kids has always been a concern for Umbach.

"The reason I was set on wrestling is because I've seen so many kids who have come out for football or basketball and they aren't big enough. It's emotional to me because I've seen kids cry about it because they just couldn't make it. They had no place to go."

# Wrestling

From page 1

Women's golf coach Ron Murphy said "It is a difficult time and a difficult situation. 'I'm naturally disappointed for our team members, especially the seniors. They are faced with either not competing or transferring and losing credits.

"I understand things are tough all over. Schools are being forced to make these decisions every day, but you don't seem to notice until they affect you. I'm sure it was a difficult decision for all involved."

The wrestling squad finished ninth in the NCAA tournament this year for its highest finish ever.

Fourth-year coach Tom Milkovich disagrees with the committee findings.

"They aren't going to sit in front of me and tell me that I'm a non-rev-

## James in town; speaks tonight

Local citizens who want a chance to have their voices heard at the Capitol may get that chance tonight as Gov. Fob James will be speaking at a public forum tonight in Opelika.

James, an Opelika native, will address citizens at Alma Martin Elementary School on North Fifth Street, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

A spokesman for the governor's

venue producer without giving me a shot at producing the revenue," said Milkovich. "I've seen money made at every program I've gone. Michigan State, Cleveland State and my high school in Maple Heights, Ohio, we always made money. For them not to give my kids the chance is wrong.

"Dan Gable, from the national championship team of Iowa, came and saw the amount of people in our gym. He asked me right there on the floor, 'Coach, what do you charge for your wrestling matches?' I said, 'We don't charge anything, Dan.' He gave me the most perplexed look and said, 'You've got to be kidding me. You got all these people in this gym, and you're not charging anything for matches. That's unheard of.' I said, 'Dan, I've been asking him for three years to charge.'"

Milkovich said he had a plan to sell season tickets for \$10 by Boy Scouts with \$2 from each going to the scouts.

Milkovich stressed that his main concern presently is for his wrestlers.

"I think they're hurting a lot of kids in the South here because of this. There are little kids who aren't big enough to play football, aren't big enough to play basketball or maybe don't have the money to have a swimming pool at their school.

There's only one thing left for these kids and that's wrestling.

"The whole bottom line of this is kids. They are hurting kids. I'm not going to stand and let the powers at this University hurt my kids. Kids are getting hurt by this. Forget about me. Let's think about these kids who have come so many miles to come here and have given their sweat, their blood and have hurt themselves in the practice rooms for the sake of Auburn University."

What upsets Milkovich most about dropping his squad is the timing of the decision. His wrestlers won't be able to transfer since other schools have completed recruiting and won't be able to offer scholarships.

Auburn is the fourth conference school in the past year to drop wrestling, following Alabama, Georgia and Florida. This is also upsetting for the former Michigan State All-American.

"I don't like our following Alabama in anything. I'm tired of this Alabama stuff. I don't like us to be followers of anybody. We should be leaders. Our kids are leaders.

"Auburn University is the leader, for sure, in one thing and that's wrestling. They haven't led in some things but they have a leader in wrestling, and they've been a guiding light for a lot of kids."

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