

No. 1

Ballester's optimism was no fluke



When it comes to being optimistic, Bill Ballester has always scored in the high 9s.

Before the season, the Oregon gymnastics coach talked about winning the Pac-8 championship and, in the same breath, mentioned that an NCAA title would be nice, too.

Some chuckled. Most didn't listen.

Now, less than two weeks away from the Pac-8 Championships, Oregon is ranked No. 1 in the country.

And why not? The Flying Ducks have beaten three top-ranked teams—Indiana State, Louisiana State and Arizona State—and their 216.75 score ranks second only to the Sun Devils' 217.60.

"I've never coached a team that put together such a perfect performance," he said after beating the Sun Devils.

He would have said more but there were too many hands to shake and, yes, too many autographs to sign.

Eugene, it seems, has discovered—or rediscovered—gymnastics. A month ago, when Louisiana State came to Mac Court, Ballester was embarrassed to be Oregon's gymnastics coach. Embarrassed because LSU had flown all the way out to Oregon and there were less than 250 fans.

Thursday night, more than 2,500 showed up. It was the third straight meet Oregon had drawn a healthy crowd.

"The crowds have been a big factor in our success," said Ballester. "An experienced team really responds positively to a loud crowd."

"The team's gotten a lot of compliments. People were coming up to me today at the Oregon Club and congratulating me."

If things are going well this year, Ballester expects even more next year. Don Read isn't the only one who's been recruiting lately.

"If we get the kids we want," said Ballester, "Oregon gymnastics could develop into a dynasty. We could be a consistent national power."

Not surprisingly, most of Ballester's prospects hail from back home—Illinois. And, again not surprisingly, they're good.

"Every top all-around gymnast in the country is interested in Oregon," said Ballester. "We've got lines on six all-around high school gymnasts who are better than anyone we've got now."

One of those six "could be a No. 1 Olympian," according to Ballester. The others aren't far behind.

The NCAA's decision to lower the maximum gymnastics scholarships from 12 to seven can only help Oregon, which has never been above the limit. Other schools, meanwhile, will have to get used to recruiting five less gymnasts.

"The Arizona State coach told me they're really going to be in trouble," said Ballester. "They're going to have to cut back."

Oregon's financial future, of course, depends heavily on the new athletic director. Chances are good that, whoever it is, he'll back a strong, all-around athletic program, just as Norv Ritchey did.

"We've got every reason to be optimistic about the future," said Ballester. "We can literally dominate gymnastics in this country if we're given a chance."

In the meantime, Ballester's thinking more about winning the Pac-8 meet to qualify for the nationals. "Our No. 1 concern is getting to the nationals," said Ballester. "We'll take care of next year, next year."

Two more in AD race

John Caine, athletic director at San Jose State, and Hindman Wall, athletic director at Cincinnati, will be interviewed this week for the Oregon athletic post, University Vice-President Ray Hawk announced Monday. Caine and Wall bring to five the announced number of candidates.

Caine, 52, arrived in Eugene Monday for interviews. Before becoming the AD at San Jose State in 1972, Caine was the AD at Cal State-Fullerton from 1968-72. He was also chairman of the PE department and head basketball coach at Eastern Illinois from 1967-68, and at Albert Lea College in Minnesota from 1966-67.

Wall, 40, will arrive in Eugene Thursday. Before joining Cincinnati in 1974, Wall was an administrative assistant and assistant athletic director at Kansas State from 1967-74.

Hawk indicated the selection should be made sometime next week. Other candidates are Bob Brodhead, former president of the Portland Thunder; Norm Van Brocklin, pro football Hall of Fame quarterback, and Ray Nagel, AD at Washington State.

Ballard nabs Pac-8 honor

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Greg Ballard, who scored 52 points and grabbed 24 rebounds to lead the Oregon Ducks past California and Stanford last weekend, was named Pacific-8 Conference basketball player of the week Tuesday.

The 6-foot-7 junior from Pomona, Calif. scored 32 points and collected 12 rebounds in Oregon's 75-64 victory over California. He scored 20 points and had 12 rebounds in a lopsided 84-62 victory over Stanford.

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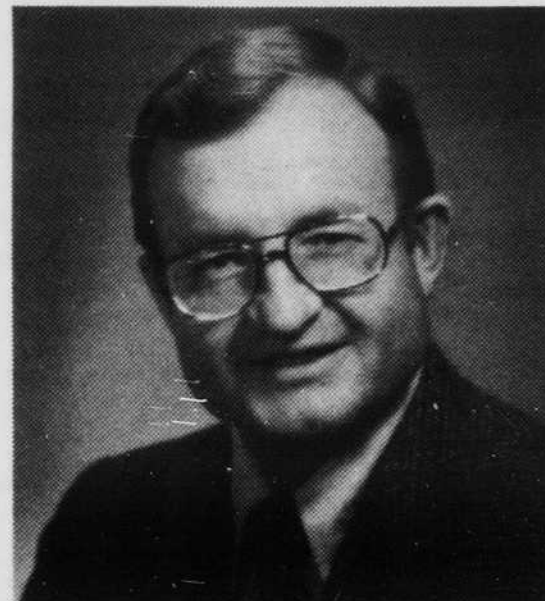
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Sportfolio

Duck women break scoring record

Oregon's women's basketball team broke its record for total points in a game Friday night as it beat Eastern Oregon, 81-69, in Gerlinger Annex. Peggy Rees led all scorers with 27 points, while Karen Banks had 22 for the Ducks.

After meeting Portland State in Portland Thursday, Oregon will host Dr. Bernard's AAU team at 5 p.m. Sunday in Gerlinger Annex.

Gymnasts slate last home meet

The women's gymnastics team will have its last home meet at 7 p.m. tonight in Gerlinger Annex with OCE. Oregon seniors competing in their last home appearance will be Ann Olson and Sue Wilson.

Tracksters win in Seattle

Carol Amaral won the 60-yard dash in 7.0 and Deliene Wikoff and Mary Lou Armstrong won their heats in the 300-yard run to lead the Oregon women who entered the University of Washington Indoor Invitational track meet Sunday.

Karen Marshall and Leslie Winbigler, with respective throws of 54-3 and 40-1½ took second and third places in the shot put, for the Ducks.