

A tourney

It's up in the air for Oregon



Will Oregon's basketball team spend spring vacation in a post-season tournament or betting cokes on 30-footers inside Mac Court?

You'd think the Ducks, a team that's won 18 games and beaten UCLA by 20 points at Pauley, deserve one of the 44 spots offered by the NCAA and National Invitational Tournaments.

But the selection committees might think otherwise.

By now, it's doubtful the Ducks will wind up in the NCAA tourney — even if they cream the Beavers Thursday night.

"We judge mainly on the total win-loss record and the strength of schedule," said an NCAA official Monday.

Oregon, obviously, doesn't rate high in either categories. The Ducks, now 18-10, were the only team in the Top Twenty last week with more than five losses. And unlike last year when Oregon played — and beat — non-league material like Nevada-Las Vegas, Villanova, Arizona State and Providence, the Ducks have had a relatively easy non-Pac-8 slate.

Even if the Ducks beat Oregon State and Washington State were to upend Washington Saturday, the Huskies will probably gain the NCAA at-large berth on the strength of their 22-4 record.

The NCAA will release names of some of the at-large teams Thursday at 2:30 CST; meaning neither game would be taken into consideration. Then again, said spokesman, the NCAA may wait to see the results of weekend action.

It's still conceivable Oregon State could get the NCAA berth, but highly unlikely. "There's nothing that says Oregon State can't get to the tourney," said the NCAA spokesman.

He did, however, point out that ineligible Lonnie Shelton "did make a significant contribution to Oregon State's season," regardless of the Beavers' success without him the last three games.

Shelton's ineligibility virtually rules out the Beavers.

What about the Ducks chances in the NIT? First it's imperative Oregon beat Oregon State Thursday night.

"There's no doubt the outcome will weigh heavily in our decision," said Pete Carlesimo, president of the NIT.

The Beaver game aside, here's what the Ducks have going for them:

First, a name. The Ducks finished a surprising third last year in the NIT. And their hard-nosed style and Ron Lee, who was the tourney's MVP, were hits with the New York fans.

"Oregon established some tradition last year," said Carlesimo. "They made a fine impression."

Lee is certain to be a factor. "He's well thought of back here," said Carlesimo.

Dick Harter's Eastern roots won't hurt. "Yes, Harter's involvement is another factor," said Carlesimo. "Frankly, Oregon's got a lot going for it."

Throw in that 20-point win over UCLA at Pauley and you'd think the Ducks would be a cinch.

There are other factors, however, which hurt the Ducks' chances.

For openers, the tournament selected 16 teams last year and will invite only 12 this year. The NIT likes about three-fourths of the clubs to be Eastern teams, and, if possible, from New York.

Last year, for example, the tourney included St. Johns, Lafayette, Manhattan, Massachusetts, Southern Illinois, Pittsburgh, Providence, Clemson, South Carolina, Connecticut, Princeton, Holy Cross, Memphis State, Oral Roberts, St. Peter's and Oregon.

Second, the selection committee isn't raving about the Ducks' 18-10 record.

Third, Oregon's non-league schedule hasn't been overly tough. Wins over Boise State and Montana State don't thrill selection committees.

Fourth, the Ducks can't boast of two major tournament wins as they could last year (Steel Bowl and Far West Classic.)

A win over eighth-ranked Washington Thursday night would have made things a whole lot easier for the Ducks. Carlesimo, however, wouldn't estimate how much effect the loss had on Oregon's chances.

The NIT first looks at a team's overall win-loss record. Then it looks at (1) the team's success at home compared to its success on the road, (2) common opponents among teams in the running, (3) the team's first-half season compared to its second-half, (4) its individual stars and (5) its basketball tradition in New York.

"The way I see it," summarized Carlesimo, "Things are up in the air out there. We're going to see what happens this weekend and then make our selection."

Which means Thursday night's Oregon-Oregon State game means a whole lot more than a state championship

At least for Oregon.

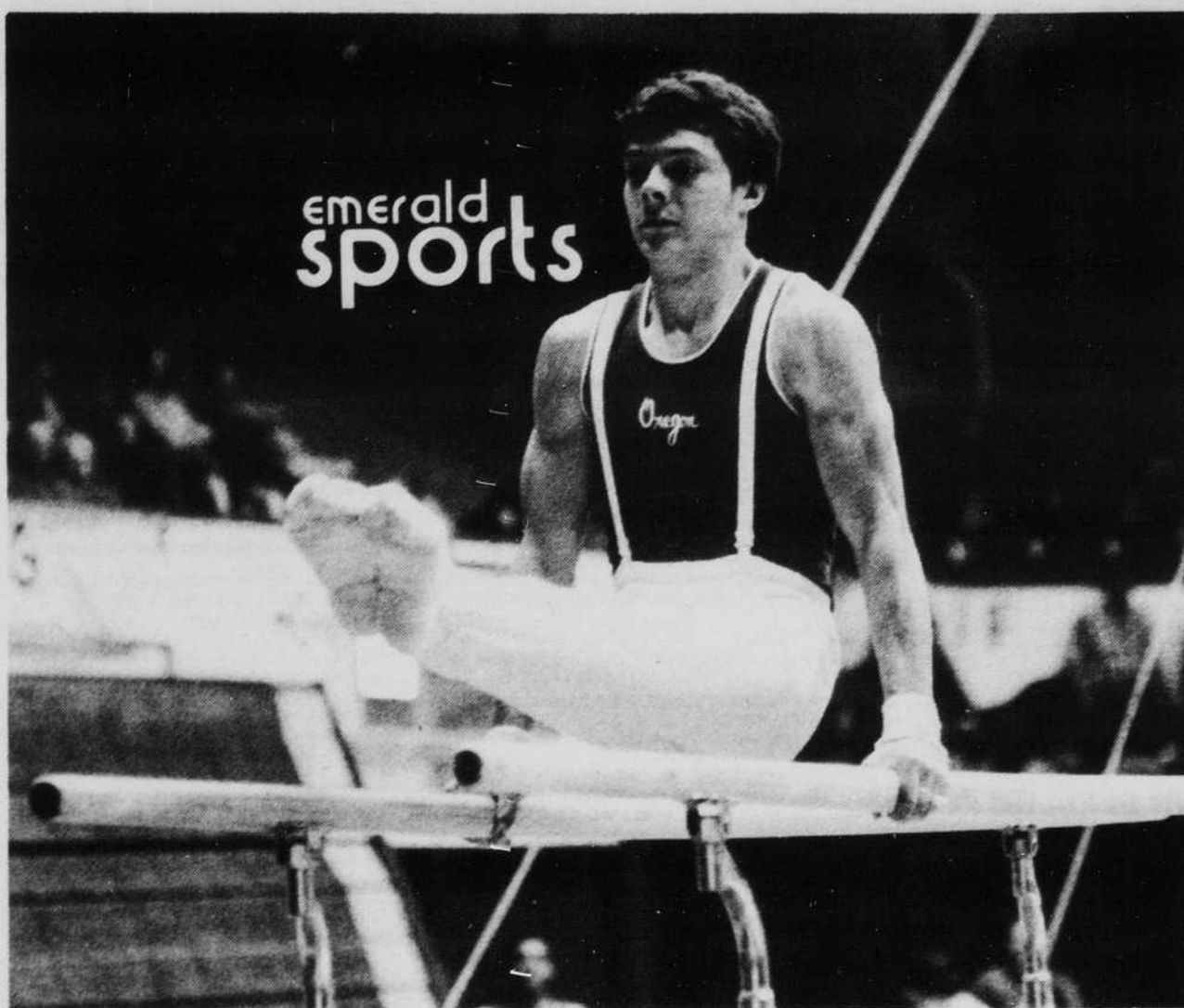


Photo by John Johns

Scott Phillips and the Ducks will be after their first Pac8 championship beginning Thursday.

Ballester: Flying Ducks need crowd support to unseat Bears

By JEFF NIELSON
Of the Emerald

Bill Ballester is a coach with a problem.

The Oregon gymnastics team has its most important meet of the season this weekend — the Pacific-8 Championships in McArthur Court Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The problem is, the Ducks must compete in the compulsories Thursday night — the same night as the all-important Oregon-Oregon State basketball game in Corvallis.

Ballester is worried nobody will be in Mac Court to cheer on the Flying Ducks. The compulsories count 50 per cent of the team score, and Oregon needs a good crowd, says Ballester, to get by defending NCAA champion California.

"We've done all we can do, mentally and physically," said Ballester. "Now it's up to our students to show their support for the gymnastics program."

Those who do make their way into Mac Court Thursday will be in for some outstanding competition. Five Pac-8 champions are returning from last year — California's Tom Weeden, in the all-around competition; Oregon's Bob Rikli in floor exercise; Stanford's Ted Marcy, on the pommel horse; Al Garcia, another California entry on the rings and UCLA's Steve Sargeant on the high bar.

While the top three individuals in each event advance to the NCAA nationals in Philadelphia, only the Pac-8 champion can go on to compete for the national team title.

This year, the team battle looks to be a showdown between the Bears and Oregon. One thing is different this year, however — California is going into the meet as the underdogs.

"We're going into this meet expecting to win," said Ballester about the number-one ranked Ducks. "We don't have any weak performers. Cal's got everyone back from last year — virtually the same team as in last year's nationals though. We have to get top performances out of everyone to win."

Barring any tragedies in com-

pulsory competition, the Ducks should do well in the optionals Friday and Saturday. Oregon has several gymnasts among the best in the nation this year.

Scott McEldowney's 9.65 mark on the still rings is best in the nation this season. Bob Rikli and Mark Stone, who have 9.65 scores on the horizontal bar, are second in the country. Other marks — such as Tom Truedson's 9.6 on the pommel horse and Don Lester's 9.5 and Rikli's 9.4 in floor exercise — place them among the top five performers this year.

Oregon has plenty of talent, but Ballester still stresses the importance of the compulsories, where each gymnast is required to go through a sequence of moves the

same for everyone.

"Thursday night is when we need the home crowd," said Ballester. "A good, enthusiastic crowd will really help us. I don't care if people bring their radios with them into Mac Court — Cal is extremely strong in compulsory competition, and the fans could make all the difference."

Friday night's competition will be preliminary optionals. The top eight scorers in each event will advance to Saturday's meet, where the top three gymnasts in each event will go on to the NCAA's.

Doors open at 7 p.m. each night for the 8 p.m. competition. Admission for Oregon students and their spouses is \$1.

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