

sports

Commentary

A balanced Pac-8? Take a closer look

Mike Marino

Every year people outside of Westwood hope to avoid the inevitable in Pac-8 basketball — UCLA winning the conference.

But for the past 11 years — and be prepared to make that twelve — they've had their way in Bruinland. Some people say they tried to throw a wrench in the system by bringing in Gene Bartow for a couple of years. He really blew it — he won it twice. And now they've got Gary Cunningham at the helm, heading the Bruins to another conference title.

Or so it seems to most. "Until we've played through the conference, we don't know who's going to win the conference," Cunningham said yesterday. "These next two weeks will be very important, with each team playing two games at home and two on the road. "But right now you can't really say that UCLA will definitely win."

It isn't February yet, either. The advantage the Bruins have over everyone else is that they're immune to the disease that plagues "the other seven" — they don't get caught up in the "I'll beat you, you'll beat me" syndrome.

"They never have gotten behind," said Dick Harter. "They aren't in the position to play catch-up like the rest of us are."

And perhaps in no other year has it been more evident. Washington State was figured to give the Bruins a run for their money. So was Cal. The Bears beat the Cougars and the Cougars beat Stanford. Stanford beat Washington, who beat Washington State and all the while UCLA sits at the top, unblemished and unbowed.

All this reflects on the Pac-8 as a conference. When you have a few "others," you call it balanced. And boy, is it balanced! So much so, in fact, that it's likely you won't find another conference team in the NCAA tourney come this March.

Why? Because this year, at least, the conference is terrible. There may be a few exciting games — like the overtimes a while back with the California schools and Oregon State — but outside of the conference it's likely to be a disaster. Ralph Miller is 4-1 at OSU to be sure, but his Beavers were destroyed earlier this year on the Atlantic Coast by North Carolina and Wake Forest.

This is what the NCAA selection committee looks at. Sure, Washington, Washington State — and even Oregon — will continue their "winning programs" by finishing with 15, 16, or 17 wins on the season, but those wins will be deceiving. A national committee will see that the defeated were among the likes of Gonzaga, Pacific Lutheran and Doane College.

There are hundreds and hundreds of teams in the country that win 17 games in a season. That's no great achievement. Getting into the NCAA tourney would be — but only UCLA is likely to do that.

"They have better players," Harter offered. "If we competed against Cal-Davis or Sacramento State all the time we'd win all the time, too. In the past, it's been inevitable that UCLA would win the league."

Maybe we should ban the Bruins. Or play them only when 1) they have coaching problems; 2) they field a team of midgets; or 3) they agree to spot all the other conference teams 30 points.

As difficult as it may seem, or as premature as it may be, you can write off the rest of the Pac-8 schools as far as playoffs are concerned. Even the NIT might not take a Pac-8 school. "If we keep chopping each other, they won't," Harter affirmed. "They'll be looking for a good won-loss record and a super player."

No one fits the bill. The Cougars were pushing Stuart (Brick) House as a star for a while, but he's been hobbling all season. Cal has Gene Ransom, but their won-loss is now 9-9.

So what's a conference to do? Fold up and wait for track? Hardly. The teams under the Bruins will have to take a good look at the position they're in and change it. Yes, UCLA has the inside lane for recruiting with its location in Southern California, but they get only so many players.

That comes later, though. For the rest of the season, pride will have to take over. "We're going to play hard every game out," Harter said. "You can't play all your conference games like you're two up with three games to go. No one is in that position."

Except UCLA. "But even we don't have it that easy," Cunningham said respectfully. "Every school gets up for UCLA and no matter how hard things are going for them, they'll be aiming up for us."

"And toward the end of the season, teams that have faced adversity will be trying to salvage a season by beating a team like UCLA." It's about all they have left. Except balance.

Kuhn rejects Blue trade, urges clubs to alter deal

NEW YORK (AP)—Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn rejected the trade of Vida Blue to the Cincinnati Reds Monday, but urged the two clubs to restructure the transaction.

The decision, announced by his office after Kuhn had left for Boston, was precipitated by the \$1.75 million that the Reds had paid Oakland owner Charles O. Finley for Blue, a 3-time 20-game winner.

Kuhn has placed an informal \$400,000 ceiling on the price any team could pay another club for an individual player. The Reds and A's tried to skirt that limit when Cincinnati included minor league slugger Dave Revering in the Blue deal which was announced at baseball's winter meetings in Hawaii last December.

Within minutes of the announcement of the trade, Kuhn informed both clubs that he was withholding approval pending his examination of the transaction.

Finley and Reds President Bob Howsam spent two days testifying at hearings called by the commis-

sioner earlier this month. There was an attempt at a compromise that would have sent other Reds players to Oakland and reduced the cash involved in the transaction. But, when that could not be worked out, the commissioner stopped the deal, then suggested that the two clubs renegotiate during the second interleague trading period that runs from Feb. 15 to March 15.

In Cincinnati the Reds said they would have no comment until they could study the 15-page decision.

In Oakland, Blue's attorney, Richard Sequeira, said he would have no comment until he gets the decision.

It marked the second time that Kuhn has refused to allow Finley to move Blue to another team. Nineteen months ago, the commissioner blocked the sale of Blue to the New York Yankees for \$1.5 million and also disallowed sales for \$1 million each of outfielder Joe Rudi and relief pitcher Rollie Fingers to Boston.

Rudi and Fingers both played out their options with Oakland and moved to other teams as free agents with Finley receiving nothing in return.

— sportfolio —

Table Tennis team wins

The Club Sports Table Tennis team defeated Portland Community College 8-7 and Portland State 14-1. The team is now tied with PCC for 1st place in the Northwest Collegiate Table Tennis League. Leading Oregon were Young Jo Kim and Estand Sangari, who won all six of their matches.

Soccer deadline nears

The deadline for entering soccer teams in the intramural program is Wednesday, Feb. 1. Soccer team managers will meet in 171 Esslinger Monday, February 6, at 4 p.m. Soccer officials will meet in 171 ESL on Tuesday, February 7, also at 4 p.m.

Trampoline open Wednesdays

Coed recreational trampoline is open to all students of all skill levels in B-50 B Gerlinger Annex on Wednesday nights from 7:00-9:00 p.m. P.E. Clothing is required.



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