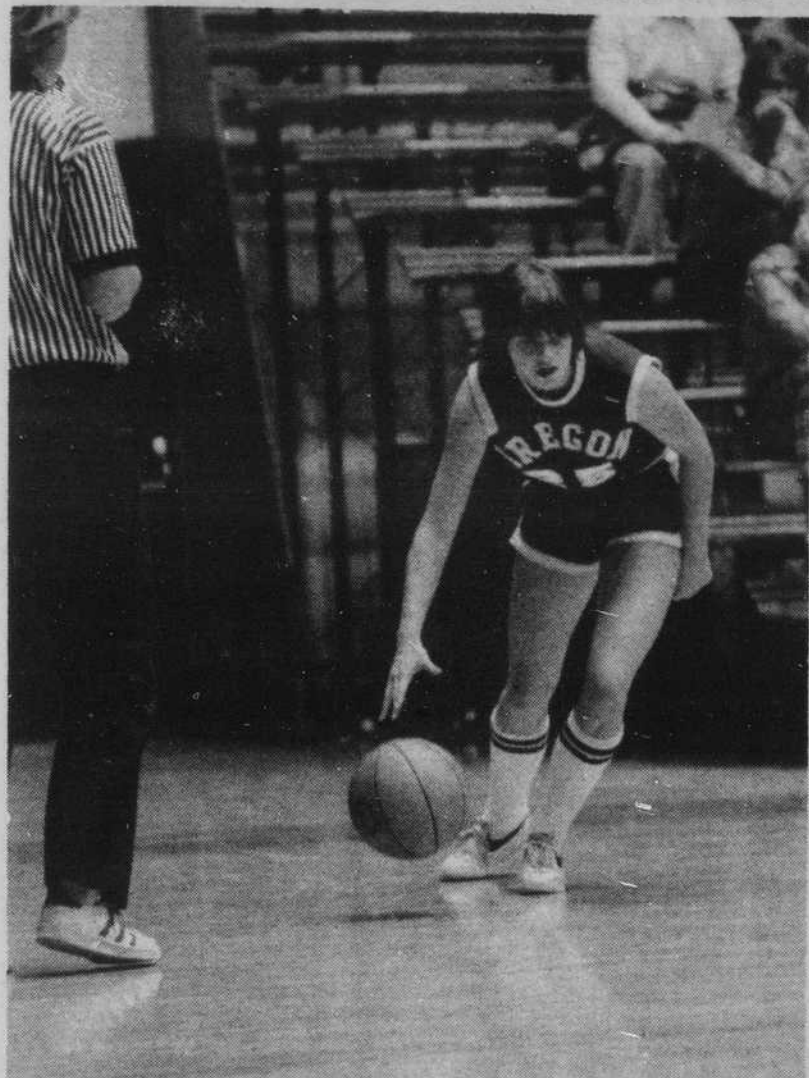


Women shoot for basketball title

Ducks expect to dominate regionals



Junior Julie Cushing is the Ducks leading scorer as they go into the Region 9 championships this weekend in Bozeman, Mont.

By JIM ALLEN
Of the Emerald

Oregon's women's basketball team has climbed atop the Northwest Women's Basketball League this year, but its 20-0 record will go for naught if the team doesn't peak at the Region 9 tournament this weekend in Bozeman, Mont.

Currently ranked 20th in the nation, the Ducks must win the six-team tournament in order to advance to the West Coast sectional tourney next weekend at Stanford.

Coach Elwin Heiny says he plans to stay with the same game plan that has brought his team the best record in school history.

"If we play like we have been playing — like we know we can play — then we will win," says Heiny. "We just have to play like a team."

As the top-ranked team, they will skip the first round of the tourney and will face the winner of tonight's game between Montana and Seattle University. In the other bracket, Mountain Division champion Washington State will also bypass the first round and will face the winner of tonight's second game between Oregon State and Montana State, the host

team. The Ducks second-round game will be played at 5 p.m. with Saturday's championship game slated for 6:30 p.m.

Despite Oregon's record, one loss in the Region 9 tourney will end the season, because only one team from the region advances to the sectionals. Heiny says he figures to advance, based on lopsided victories over almost every other team in the region. Only Oregon State has challenged the women this season, coming within 13 points (78-65) of the Ducks last Thursday at McArthur Court.

"We hadn't really practiced for Oregon State," says Heiny, "because we thought we could beat them. We didn't front Carol Maiken (the NWBL's scoring leader) like we were supposed to. Some of the players didn't do their jobs."

The player doing the best job recently, says Heiny, has been junior guard Julie Cushing, whose outside shooting has helped her take the team scoring lead. Cushing, the team's leading scorer during four of the last five

games, scored a team high 19 points against the Beavers. She also stole the ball nine times and had three assists.

Freshman forward Bev Smith began the season averaging 20 points per game, but her average has since fallen to 15.9 points per game.

"Bev still plays, and leads us, in every phase of the game, and she should again be a scoring threat," explains Heiny. "But she's been under a lot of pressure lately from a heavy school load."

Smith, who will not attend school next term so she can train with the Canadian national team, must complete 18 credit hours this term to be eligible to play for the Ducks next year. The Canadian team, which will be competing in the World Championships next month in Korea, will begin practicing in three weeks.

Before Smith leaves for Canada, she must see Oregon through post-season play. And if the Ducks continue to win, it may be awhile before she leaves.

Matmen vie for high finish

By TAMARA SWENSON
Of the Emerald

After taking fourth-place in the Pac-10, the Duck wrestling team has a good chance to be in the top 20 in the national meet, says coach Ron Finley.

Five Oregon wrestlers will compete in the 300-team tournament that begins today in Ames, Iowa.

"There's a lot of luck involved in a tournament," says Finley, whose team was 14-10 in dual meets this year. "Our luck at nationals will depend on the draw."

Finley says his wrestlers shouldn't be awed by the competition at nationals. "We're wrestling in a tough league, with some of the best in the country. If we can do as well at nationals as in the Pac-10, then we deserve to place."

Bill Nugent, Craig Schoene, Scott Bliss, Don Brown and Adam Cuestas should accumulate points, says Finley. "That is what I'm shooting for. Individually Scott

Bliss has the best chance of placing."

Bliss, a 150-pound junior, was sixth in nationals last year. "Bliss is one of the top wrestlers in his weight class in the country," says Finley. "He should be seeded in the top five at the meet, and if he gets the draws he could place high."

The luck of the draw should be important to all five Ducks. Nugent, a 134-pound freshman, has won 25 matches this season, and says he thinks he can pick up a few more at nationals. "I think I have a reasonably good chance," he says. "If I'm lucky, anything could happen."

Although Finley doesn't envision a championship, he too admits that anything could happen. "If we can get two placers — Bliss and possibly Don Brown or Craig Schoene — we will be in the top 20."

Finley says he knows getting in the top 20 will be hard. "Everyone wants one of those top 20 places," he says. "We were 21st last year with 11-and-a-half points — 20th shouldn't be that hard."

The Ducks are in top condition for the tournament, adds the coach. "We're fired up and ready to go. Each wrestler knows what they'll be up against, but we've already faced some of the best."

Blazers slip past Jazz

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Guards Ron Brewer and Dave Twardzik combined for 19 of Portland's final 23 points Wednesday night as the Trail Blazers edged New Orleans 103-102 in National Basketball Association play.

The Jazz led nearly all the time in the first three periods, taking a 70-65 lead into the final quarter.

But eight New Orleans fouls in a 1:50 stretch early in the fourth period allowed Portland to race from a 72-67 deficit to a 76-72 lead with 8:45 remaining.

The victory was the first ever for Portland in New Orleans, and lifted the Trail Blazers' record to 54-31. New Orleans fell to 21-46.

Oregon Daily Emerald

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LaDanna Earley
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