

Region — the first step

Other teams hope to beat No. 1 Ducks

Taking the first step toward nationals could be difficult as every team in the regional tournament will be looking to knock Oregon out.

Beginning Saturday, the Ducks begin a single elimination series that could lead to the AIAW final four.

Or there could be a repeat of the 1979 tournament, when Oregon State upset the Ducks in the championship game.

With every team in the league hoping to knock the 12th-ranked Ducks out of contention and gain the region's national berth, Oregon will have to play intense basketball, says Oregon coach Elwin Heiny.

"We start playing for keeps then," says Heiny, who led the Ducks to a 23-5 season and a third undefeated league season.

"And it seems like the rest of the league is out to get who ever is on top."

There is no doubt that Oregon, the tournament's top seed, is the favorite. But each of the other teams in the tournament, slated in Missoula, Mont., is ready, says Washington coach Sue Kruszewski.

"All the teams want to make it to the final four in Montana," says Kruszewski. "And we all want to win the region."

Oregon's All-American candidate, Bev Smith, says, "They have nothing to lose. We've got a lot to lose. It won't be easy."

The Ducks, winners of the coast division, and Montana, winner of the mountain division, have byes in the first-round playoffs, which were played Tuesday night.

Oregon State flattened Washington State in Corvallis, 86-46, while Washington beat Eastern Washington, 67-48, in Seattle (See Page 8B for complete results).

Host Montana will face OSU in the first game of the tournament at 12:30 p.m. (PST) Saturday, while the Ducks will follow with a 2:30 p.m. (PST) game against Washington.

Sunday's third-round consolation game is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. (PST) followed by the championship game at 12:30 p.m. (PST). Both Oregon games will be broadcast by KUGN (590-AM).

"It seems very likely that we'll

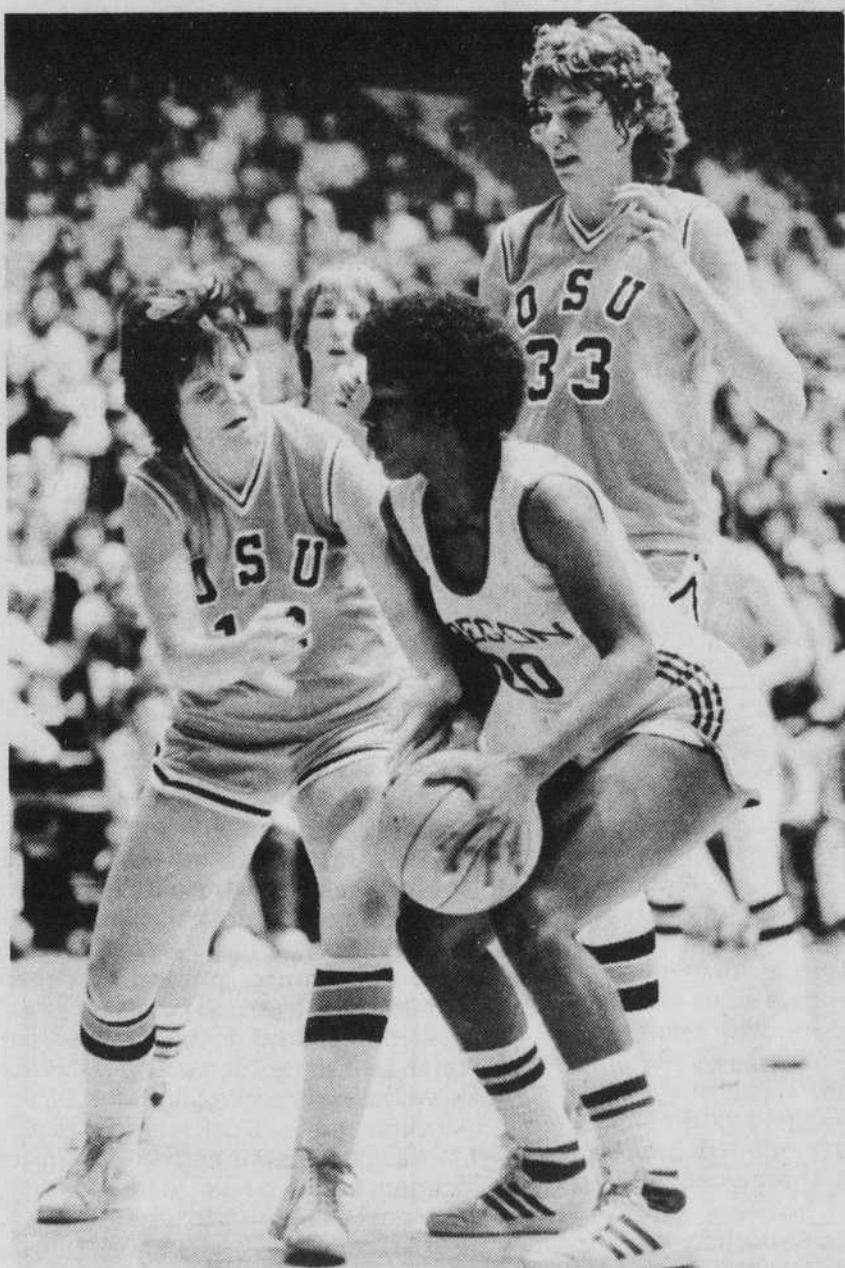


Photo by Steve Dykes

Debbie Adams (10) brings the ball down court against OSU's Betty Collings and Carol Menken (33) during Oregon's 80-66 victory over the Beavers.

meet OSU in the finals," says Heiny. Oregon State finished second in the region.

Oregon State coach Aki Hill is also expecting a match-up between the two schools.

"We're relaxed mentally, ready to take on anyone, including Oregon, and win," Hill says.

But, Oregon has no intention of letting that happen, says senior guard Debbie Adams.

Adams and Smith are the only two Ducks left from the team that lost to OSU in the 1979 championship game.

"That's all in the past," says Adams, who is only 21 points away from moving in second place on Oregon's career scoring list. "We aren't even thinking about it anymore."

The Ducks are totally prepared to play OSU in the finals, says senior guard Allison Towriss. "If we both make the finals — they'll go back to the NIT (National Invitational Tournament). And I hope they go as far there as they did last year (OSU won the NIT)."

"But we've beaten them three

times this season, and we didn't even play our best," Towriss says.

The Ducks downed Oregon State 72-71 at the Guisti Tournament, then beat them twice in regular season play.

"It'll probably be ourselves and OSU in the final," says Smith, who leads Oregon in scoring and rebounding. "We know what it's like to play in a press situation. And we know how to prepare."

"We have that certain kind of experience that will pull us through."

Oregon's games from early in the season will be a definite advantage, says Heiny. "We played tough, nationally ranked teams and played them close."

The Ducks have played six teams in the nation's top 20, including five currently in the top 10.

"We know the level we played at pre-season," says Adams. "We're more experienced now and ready to play above that level now."

By Tamara Swenson

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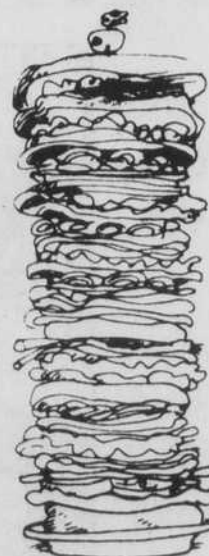
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