

# Oregon hopes to pack Pit by reaching final 4

McArthur Court rocks as 10,000 fans leap to their feet.

A player takes the ball the length of the court and puts it in for two.

The fans yell loudly and clap their hands in rhythm as the crowd favorite sets up its defense.

It would be a familiar scenario to Oregon women's basketball team if the Ducks reach the "final four."

Familiar, because the AIAW National Championships, alias the "final four," will be held this year at the University's own Mac Court.

But for the Ducks to reach the championship round at the Pit, they will have to play top basketball consistently for 40 minutes a game, throughout the regional championships

and the three games which precede the national championships.

"I would say we are definitely not favored to make it to the final four," says Oregon Coach Elwin Heiny, who guided his club to a 23-5 record this season. "We are more of a dark horse; we could sneak in through the back door."

The Ducks should know the backdoor to Mac Court rather well.

If Oregon manages to venture through the Northwest Women's Basketball League Regional Championships unscathed, chances are they will host a first-round AIAW playoff game March 18 at 4:30 p.m.

"First of all we have to get through the regional tournament," says Heiny. "Then we can talk more about a game here. We have to be the favorite at the tourney because we have beaten everybody. But we have to win those games first."

Oregon's opponent for the first-round playoff game, which would be sandwiched between the State Class AA boys basketball tournament, could be a team from the Midwest, Heiny says.

"I'd anticipate playing someone like Minnesota or Colorado in the first round here," he says. "The committee will avoid trying to send someone from the East Coast out here."

According to coaches around the nation, the only clear choice to reach the final four is top-ranked Louisiana Tech. The Lady Techsters possess a 27-0 record and are

second in the nation in scoring with a 90.3 average.

"Louisiana Tech is really the only team I could list as the favorite," says Joan Bonvicini, coach of second-ranked Cal State-Long Beach. "The rest of the pack will really be a dogfight."

Heiny agrees.

"Louisiana Tech is a great team," he says. "They do not have as much height as I thought, but they are good. I really wouldn't mind playing them at home, but not there. The same goes with Old Dominion; I wouldn't want to play them at their place, but I wouldn't mind playing them here."

Of the top 20 teams in the nation, the Ducks have played five, losing four of those games. The Ducks have succumbed to Long Beach (91-80), third-ranked Kansas (69-62), sixth-ranked Old Dominion (68-67), and ninth-ranked UCLA (92-88). Oregon has beaten 20th-ranked Stephen F. Austin 82-78.

With game experience like this behind them, the Ducks feel they can reach the final four. But if teams like Louisiana Tech and Old Dominion are in the same bracket, the Ducks may never get a chance to realize their dream.

"I do not want to get in the same bracket as Old Dominion or Louisiana Tech," says Heiny matter-of-factly. "If we don't get in the same bracket as those two we have an excellent chance of reaching the finals."

"I think that our team is capable of playing with any



Photo by Steve Dykes

Old Dominion's Ann Donovan, seen here shooting over Bev Smith at the Giusti tournament, will be a powerful force in the AIAW playoffs.

team in the nation."

The guesswork for the final four will be made much easier after Sunday, when regional championships are completed and the 10 champs from the regionals plus 14 at-large teams will be seeded into the championship bracket.

The top eight seeds will have first-round byes, while the next eight seeded teams will have the home-court advantage in

the first round. The first three rounds (March 18, 21 and 24) will all be played at the home court of the highest ranked team.

After these rounds are completed, the four survivors will head to McArthur Court for the championship.

And wouldn't the Ducks like to have the home court edge in the national championships?

By Steve Turcotte

## Top 20

1. Louisiana Tech (27-0)
2. Long Beach State (24-5)
3. Tennessee (19-5)
4. Kansas (24-4)
5. Rutgers (25-4)
6. Old Dominion (23-5)
7. UCLA (25-5)
8. Cheney State (23-2)
9. USC (21-6)
10. Kentucky (22-4)
11. Texas (26-6)
12. Oregon (23-5)
13. Maryland (17-7)
14. North Carolina St. (20-8)
15. Minnesota (26-5)
16. Clemson (23-6)
17. Auburn (25-5)
18. Colorado (28-4)
19. Stephen F. Austin (21-9)
20. East Carolina (23-6)

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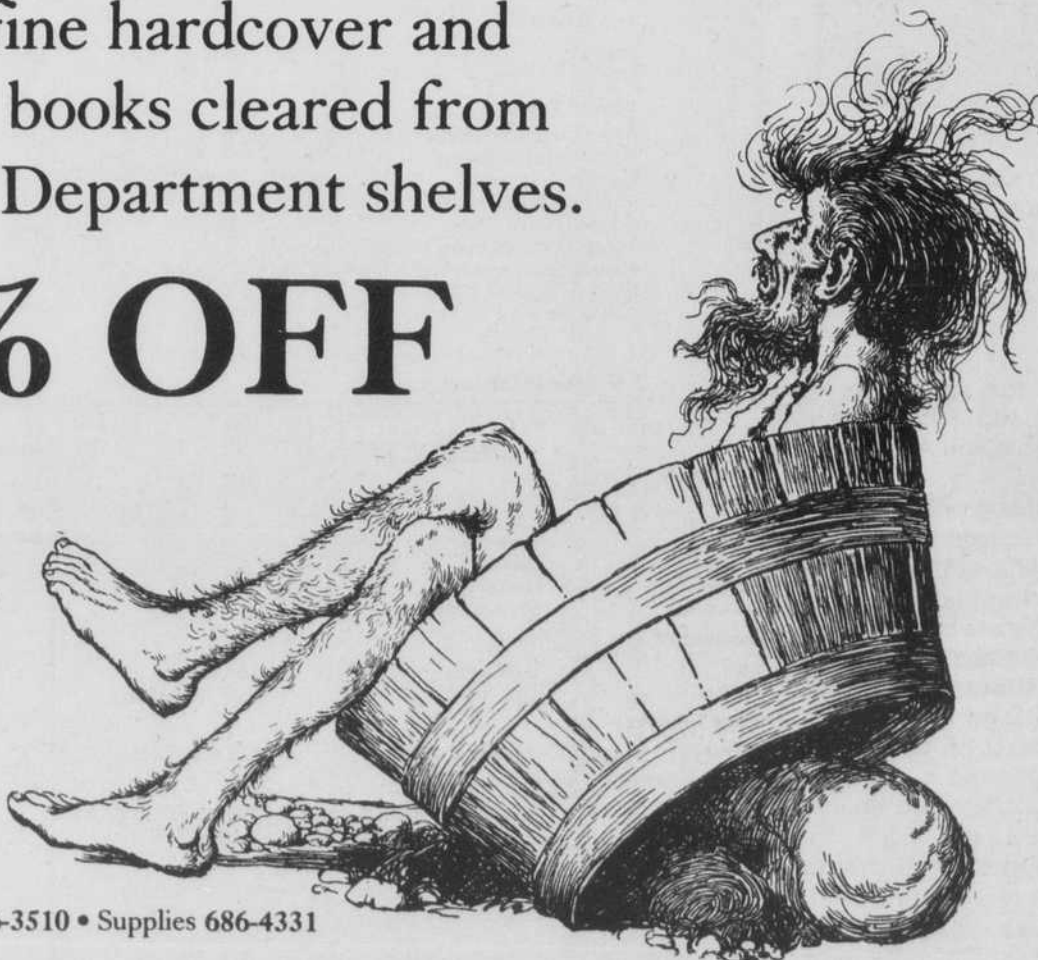
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