

Oregon tangles with league-leading Arizona

By Brent De La Paz
Of the Emerald

In a country where the sun, desert, cactus and wildlife are just some of the dangers in the Southwestern part of the United States, the Oregon men's basketball team has found another.

The Ducks find themselves in Tucson, Arizona for a Pacific-10 Conference game against the league-leading University of Arizona Wildcats starting tonight at 7:35 in the McKale Center.

Arizona coach Lute Olson's team has been one of the surprises of Pac-10 this year. The Wildcats, 19-6 overall, are sitting in a first place tie at 10-3 for the Pac-10's top spot with Southern California.

With only five games remaining, Olson knows his team can't afford a loss at this juncture in order to win the title.

"Well, I hope we have enough energy left to play," Olson says about the

Oregon game tonight, Arizona's third game in six days.

"This crazy Pac-10 scheduling makes everyone get weeks likes this. It makes no sense at all," Olson says. "Four games in an eight-day period. It is a little tough."

The Wildcats are just beginning to unpack their suitcases after playing a Monday night game against the Washington State Cougars in Pullman, Wash. The

result was a hard-fought 63-60 win for the Wildcats, but Arizona must now face the two Oregon schools with the league championship hanging in the balance.

"I think our kids will be ready," says Olson, who complained of only one preparation day for the Ducks. "Every game is vital."

Vital is what the game means to Oregon, who could have its second winning season under coach Don Monson. The Ducks, 12-13 overall and 5-7 in the

Pac-10, aren't thinking about a league championship, but they consider the Arizona game as a chance to make up for the last meeting between these two teams.

That game, an easy 73-54 Arizona victory at McArthur Court, has Monson and the Ducks looking to even the score. An Arizona loss would possibly prevent the Wildcats from winning their first-ever Pac-10 basketball title.

"I got extremely beat bad in my own gym," Monson says of the last contest between the two in January.

Monson remembers the shellacking and so do the Ducks, who would like nothing better than to knock the Wildcats from their lofty position atop the standings.

The Ducks in their past two games have gained some momentum after sweeping the Washington schools last week. The momentum seems to be hit-

ting Oregon's 7-foot center Blair Rasmussen right in stride. Rasmussen, last week's Pac-10 Player of the Week, has three consecutive 20-point and above performances and that has Olson worried.

"He (Rasmussen) is going to get his points," Olson says. "We match up extremely well in all the other four positions."

Arizona has the quick guard combination of Steve Kerr and Brock Brunkhorst. Their pinpoint outside shooting has opened up the inside for the Pac-10's version of the "Bruise Brothers."

The Wildcats have one the best front lines in the league with forwards Eddie Smith and Morgan Taylor and center Pete Williams. Smith, a 6-7 senior, has been hitting at a 16.4 points per game, while Williams has been hitting 12.5 and 8.8 rebounds per Pac-10 game.

Ducks hope to nab NorPac playoff spot

By Robert Collias
Of the Emerald

The Oregon women's basketball team will try to nail down a playoff spot this weekend as the Ducks travel to the state of Washington to take on two NorPac Conference opponents. Oregon will play the 12th-ranked University of Washington Huskies tonight at 7:30 and then venture to Pullman to face the Washington State University Cougars on Saturday night.

A win in either game this weekend will clinch a NorPac playoff spot for the Ducks. Oregon, 11-12 and 4-4 in the NorPac, is currently tied for third in the conference with Fresno State University with seven points. Washington (13 points) and Oregon State (12 points) have clinched the top two spots in the league.

In the conference's complicated scoring system, each game this weekend is worth one point because the teams will be meeting for the second time this season. In games in which the opponents meet each other once during the season, the contests are worth two points.

Against the Huskies, Oregon will be facing a team that is on a roll. Washington is 21-1 overall

and 8-0 in the NorPac. The Huskies, who have won 16 games in a row, beat the Ducks in Eugene earlier this year, 65-57.

Washington is led by All-American candidate Leteia Hughley, who is averaging 18.6 points and 5.9 rebounds per game. Hughley scored 21 points in the first meeting between the two schools.

Hughley is one of the finest shooters and ball-handlers in the country," Oregon coach Elwin Heiny says. "We will have to stop her if we plan on beating Washington."

Oregon's best chance for a victory this weekend will be against Washington State at Pullman Saturday night. WSU, 9-14 overall and 3-5 in the NorPac, are one of the four teams in competition for the two remaining NorPac playoff spots. The Cougars are on Oregon's heels with six NorPac points.

"The Washington State game could be for a playoff spot," Heiny says.

The Ducks have won three games in a row at home, and Heiny hopes his team will be ready to continue its winning ways on the road.

"We have been playing well at home, but we need to keep it going on the road," Heiny says.

Swimmers ready for PacWest

The Oregon men's and women's swimming teams will open up post-season competition with the PacWest Championships today through Saturday in Seattle. The women will be trying to improve on their seventh place finish of a year ago, and the men will try to match their second place finish.

"Everybody seems to be pretty excited," Oregon coach Dan Cole says. "And they all look pretty good. In workouts, we're just loosening up, getting relaxed."

According to Cole, Washington will again be the favorite in the women's competition. Runaway winners last year, Washington has a

lot of depth. They are led by Nancy Gillingham in the sprint freestyle races. The Huskies' Twila Porter and Jana Ellis also are favored to win a lot of events.

Other teams Cole figures will be in the women's title chase are Washington State, Cal-San Diego, Oregon and Montana, but none will challenge Washington. The Huskies won last year's meet.

In the men's competition, Washington is again the favorite and defending champion, but Cal-San Diego should be a close second. After those two, Oregon, Puget Sound and the University of San Diego will battle for third.

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