

Ducks down Huskies; gain World Series berth

By Gary Henley
Emerald Sports Editor

With their backs to the wall, the Oregon softball team came up with two clutch wins over Connecticut Saturday in Amherst, Mass., to win the Northeast regional playoff tournament and clinch a spot in the eight-team College World Series, beginning this Wednesday in Sunnyvale, Calif.

Down one game to none to Connecticut in the best two-out-of-three series, the Ducks, playing in front of a sparse crowd (74 paid attendance), rose from the dead in game two, pulling out a thrilling, come-from-behind 3-2 victory in 10 innings. A 6-0 Oregon win in game three clinched the series and sends the Ducks (53-16) to the Softball World Series for the first time ever.

Oregon coach Teresa Wilson took part in the 1983 College World Series as a pitcher for the Missouri Tigers and now is the first person to return to the Series as a coach.

"We're excited about our chance to go to Sunnyvale," Wilson said. "Connecticut is a very good team, and they played very, very well. We got the good hits at the right time."

Oregon, which finished the season ranked fourth in the nation, now faces eighth-ranked Cal-Poly Pomona in the first round of the Series, Wednesday at 8 p.m. at the Twin Creeks Sports Complex. Top-ranked UCLA starts things off when they face South Carolina at 6 p.m.

The Ducks, 2-1 losers to Connecticut on Friday, fell behind by a 2-1 count in the tenth inning of game two when Huskies' designated runner Sharon Arnold scored on Nina Rennhard's two-out double.

Fighting for their playoff lives, the Ducks rallied.

Stacey Funderburg, who began the bottom half of the tenth at second base under the tie-breaking rules, moved to third on a bunt by Kristl Okuhara, and scored on a Vicki Fry sin-

gle to tie the score.

Junior Ces Coulson then sliced a one-out single down the right field line, scoring Fry with the game-winner.

After coming so close to a two-game sweep, Connecticut catcher Betsy Burnham showed her team's frustration by going after Fry after the Ducks' junior left fielder had crossed the plate with the winning run.

Burnham was quoted in an Associated Press story as saying "I think she safely got in before the tag. But I swung (to make the tag) just in case. I said to her 'you guys won, what do you want to fight me for?'"

Fry gave a different version. "She was quoted in the paper as saying something that wasn't true," Fry said. "I started walking away, and she swung at me with the ball and hit me in the back. I turned around and Kathy (Gray) had knocked her down. The benches cleared and that was it. It might have been frustration."

"It was a do-or-die situation for us," added teammate Jeanna King. "We all knew that this might be our last game, and that we might never have the chance to make it to Nationals again."

"It was a very intense game," she added. "We knew that something was going to happen, and that there would be a fight. When Vicki scored, that kind of set it off."

The win tied the series at one game apiece, and from there, the Ducks' confidence soared as Oregon opened a quick 6-0 lead through four innings of game three.

Oregon pitcher Katie Wiese (41-11) tossed a two-hitter at the Huskies, striking out three and walking none.

In the first inning, Coulson punched a leadoff single up the middle, advanced to second on a Julie Cavanaugh sacrifice, and moved to third when Gray followed with a line single to right-center.

Kim Manning executed the squeeze, bringing in Coulson

and reaching safely in the process. King moved the runners up with another bunt, and Tracy Simmons' two-out grounder got through the hole and into right field, scoring both Manning and Gray.

The big first inning gave Wiese a three-run cushion, and the freshman hurler coasted from there, working six strong innings before giving way to Jan Larson, who closed out the inning, game and series.

"Katie was her normal self today," Wilson said. "She seemed to get stronger as the day went on."

Seven Ducks had hits on the day, including Simmons, who broke out of a mini-slump by driving in three runs.

"After the brawl broke out (at the conclusion of game two), we wanted to go out and totally humiliate them," King said. "We wanted to be a classy team about it though and beat them between the lines where it counted."

"They (Connecticut) really wanted to go to California bad," she added. "They were even saying that. They have a good team, but we felt they were playing over their heads. We felt like we deserved to win it, after all the hard work we've

put in this season, so there was a lot of pressure on us after we lost the first game."

Before Oregon's three-game tilt with the Huskies, the Ducks defeated host Massachusetts 2-0 on Friday, as Wiese tossed a six-hitter, striking out two and walking none for the win.

Wiese, in four games over the two days, pitched 28 of the 29 innings played, throwing 271 pitches (204 strikes).

"It's exciting to be going to the World Series," Wiese said.

"Physically, I'm in great shape."

GAME TWO

Connecticut	000	010	000	1-2	6	1
Oregon	000	100	000	2-3	7	0

Arnold and Burnham, Wiese and Cavanaugh.
W— Wiese (40-11); L— Arnold (13-6); 2B— UConn, Rennhard; Oregon, Gray; RBI— UConn, Loda, Rennhard; Oregon, Coulson, Simmons, Fry.

GAME THREE

Oregon	311	100	0-6	7	0
Connecticut	000	000	0-0	3	3

Wiese, Larson (7) and Cavanaugh, Zollner, Rybczyk, Muzsko (4) and Burnham; W— Wiese (41-11); L— Rybczyk (14-6); 2B— Oregon, Manning; RBI— Oregon, Simmons (3); Cavanaugh, Manning.

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