

Oregon improves playoff hopes with two wins

By Tracy Sumner
Emerald Sports Editor

The Oregon softball team took three giant steps toward the post-season Tuesday by moving into the NCAA's top ten list and later grabbing a pair of wins over Oregon State.

The Ducks moved from 18th to eighth in the latest NCAA poll on the strength of a double-header sweep of then eighth-ranked California last Friday. The team then moved to Howe Field where they struggled to beat the Beavers 1-0 in the first game and 2-1 in the second.

In the first game, Oregon got the game's only run after catcher Tracey Simmons reached second base on a single and an error on Beaver center fielder Janet Klaus.

After Anna Poore reached first on an OSU error, Simmons went to third on Russell's wild pitch. Kelly Finley brought Simmons home on a single to right to give Oregon its run.

With the Ducks' offense stuck in reverse for most of the game, the Oregon defense had to come up big several times in the first game to take the win.

Oregon State threatened to take a lead in the third inning when Klaus got a base hit followed an out later with a hit by Sandra Schoonover. Russell followed with a fly to short-center that would have scored at least one run for the Beavers. But Oregon center fielder Jeanna King charged and made a diving catch to end the Beaver threat.

Oregon pitcher Katie Wiese was strong but not overpowering in the game, giving up just four hits while striking out two.

The Beavers, losers of all 20 of their Pac-10 games this season, threw a bit of a scare into Oregon in the second game, taking a 1-0 lead into the fifth inning.



Photo by Mark Ylen

Center fielder Jeanna King made a diving catch to end an Oregon State scoring threat in the third inning of game one.

Oregon got the equalizer in the fifth when Duck first-baseman Julie Cavanaugh singled home Coulson. Coulson started the inning with a single to center and was moved to second on a bunt by Monica Hull and to third on a groundout by Kristl Okuhara.

The game-winner came an inning later when Simmons doubled to start the inning. Pinch-runner Bree Adams stole second and was moved to third on Poore's groundout.

Coulson followed by dribbling the ball in front of home plate. Adams came home when OSU catcher Jennifer Jillson dropped the throw, allowing the score.

The wins left the Ducks with a 33-21 record and a 9-9 finish in Pac-10 play. Oregon State dropped to 6-38 on the season.

The Ducks have two regular-season games remaining — a non-conference double-header today with the Beavers in Corvallis. With a pair of wins today, Oregon coach Tami Brown said she is confident of a bid to the NCAA tournament.

"If we win at Oregon State, we'll be 35-21," Brown said. "That and being ranked eighth might even give us a chance at hosting a game."

Brown said the Ducks have to come into today's games ready to take care of business if their season is to continue.

"If we don't beat Oregon State Wednesday, I don't think we'll have a chance," she said. "Even being ranked eighth, if we lose to a lesser team in the Pac-10, they might not take us."



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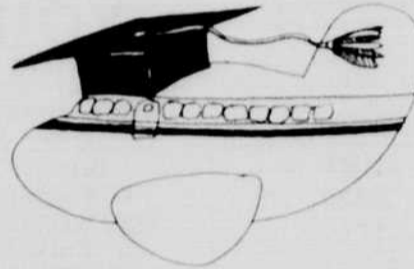
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