

SPORTS

Ducks shoot for NCAA toumey

Brandon, Lucas lead experienced team

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Editor

An Oregon men's basketball team hasn't been to the NCAA Tournament since 1961.

That could change this season.

With four returning starters and a talented incoming freshman class, Oregon Coach Don Monson could very well lead the Ducks into the 64-team NCAA show in March.

During the off-season, an NCAA bid was something all of the players thought about after going 15-14 and receiving a National Invitation Tournament bid a year ago.

"Coach told us right after the NIT game when we were in the hotel lobby in New Mexico, 'NIT this year, NCAA next year,' senior center and team captain Richard Lucas said. 'It's not only on our minds, it's something we think about constantly.'"

Junior point guard Terrell Brandon agreed that an NCAA bid is one of Oregon's top goals this season.

"With Coach Monson, after the NIT game last year, the first thing we talked about was that we feel four or five Pac-10 teams will go the NCAAs and we can be one of those teams."

Monson certainly has a team that can contend for an NCAA bid but it won't be easy as the Pacific-10 Conference has re-emerged in the last three years as one of the premiere conferences in the country.

"There's no question that it's the toughest its been since I've been here," Monson said. "There's a good chance that five teams will go to the NCAAs and we fit in there pretty well."

Arizona should again be the class of the Pac-10, but UCLA should give the Wildcats a run for their money. Both teams are top 10 teams and both could go a long way in the NCAA Tournament.

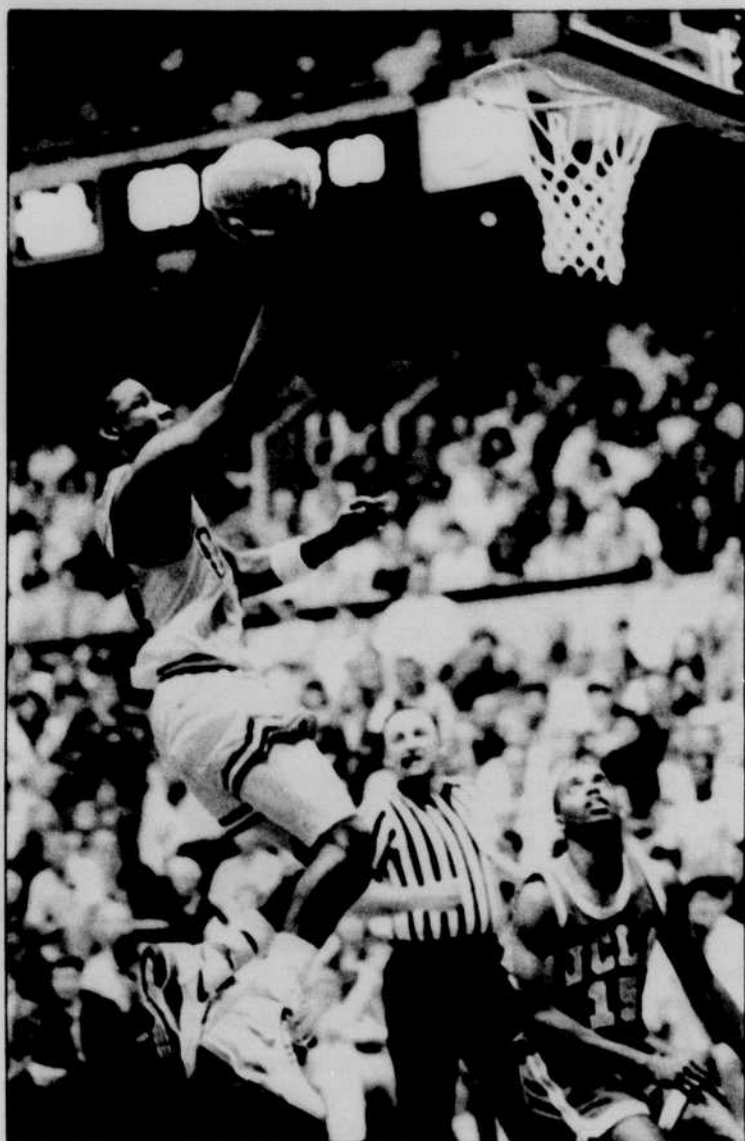
California should also be strong as well as Stanford with five returning starters. Oregon went 3-6 against those schools last year and upset both Arizona and UCLA in McArthur Court.

The talk of an NCAA Tournament bid seems incredible after the Ducks went 8-21 two seasons ago.

"The beginning of my junior year everyone and their mothers had us picked for No. 10 in the conference," Lucas said, "and some people picked us 11th out of 10 teams."

But the Ducks turned things around last season with the in-

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Junior point guard Terrell Brandon will lead Oregon after its first NCAA Tournament bid since 1961 this season.



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