

SPORTS

Ducks take NCAA hopes to UCLA

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Editor

Oregon's basketball team hasn't experienced the excitement of the NCAA Tournament's "March Madness" in 30 years.

But in the madness of the Pacific-10 Conference this season, the Ducks, 7-5 in the Pac-10 and 12-10 overall, still have a chance to be one of 64 teams in the tournament.

It won't be easy, with a road trip to Southern California this week, starting tonight with a 7:35 p.m. game against UCLA in Pauley Pavilion, followed by home games with the Arizona schools and then a trip to Arizona to end the season.

However, Oregon Coach Don Monson believes the Ducks can make the NCAA Tournament with four wins in their last six games.

"Anything I say is purely conjecture," Monson said. "We don't have to win them all. Four wins would put us 11-8 in league, and maybe that will do."

"I think in our league four teams will go, but it becomes a question of which four, and then what their record is," he said.

Arizona, leading the Pac-10 at 9-3 and 20-5 overall, is already in, and UCLA, at 18-7 overall, should be, taking into consideration non-conference wins over Virginia and Pittsburgh.

But the Bruins, only 6-6 in conference play, still need to win to get into the tournament, UCLA Coach Jim Harrick said.

"I'd say wait until the last few weeks, but I think Arizona State, USC, Oregon and Oregon State still can get in, but they need to win," he said. "Even for us, the next few games are really important."

Only Washington and California appear to be out of the picture with Washington State, 15-8 overall, and Stanford at 14-10, possibly having the best chances of getting in after Arizona and UCLA.

Pac-10 Men			
	Conf	Overall	Games
	W/L	W/L	Behind
Arizona	9-3	20-5	—
Oregon	7-5	12-10	2
Oregon St.	7-5	13-9	2
Washington St.	7-6	15-8	2½
UCLA	6-6	18-7	3
California	7-7	11-12	3
Stanford	7-7	14-10	3
Arizona St.	5-7	14-8	4
USC	5-7	14-8	4
Washington	3-10	12-11	6½

Oregon and Oregon State clearly have the toughest schedules the rest of the way, while UCLA and USC have the best remaining schedule, playing four of their last six at home. After the Ducks and Beavers, the Bruins and Trojans face the Washington schools the last two weeks of the season.

After struggling earlier in the season, it might be surprising to see the Ducks still have a chance to make the tournament, but with four straight wins, including a big win at Cal, Oregon is still in the running.

"You have to have a winning record because they (the NCAA) don't take teams without winning records," Monson said. "Our problem is that we've got six games, and we, along with the rest of the conference, aren't a great road team and don't get many wins on the road."

The Ducks are only 1-4 on the road in conference games this season compared to 6-1 at McArthur Court. It doesn't get any easier going to Pauley Pavilion where the Ducks have dropped six straight.

But with the four-game winning streak and more offensive output from forwards Bob Fife and Jordy Lyden and guard Kevin Mixon recently, Monson believes his team can win in Westwood.

"I feel pretty good going in there," he said. "We've been practicing and playing pretty well. Whether we do all the things a very good basketball team needs to do, I don't know."

Two things the Ducks need to do better, Monson said, are play better transition defense and rebound better than they did in a 90-83 loss to the Bruins at Mac Court last month.

"If they get as many offensive rebounds — I think they had 19 last time (actually 21) — then we're out of it," Monson said.

Don MacLean and Tracy Murray each had 14 rebounds in the last game and totaled 52 points as well.

Harrick, however, wasn't completely pleased with his team's performance in that game.

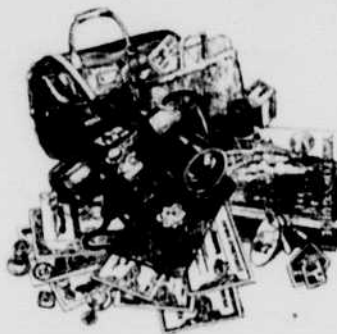
"We turned the ball over two or three times too many up there and that let them back in the game," he said.

In this strange season, the Ducks have an opportunity to get back into the NCAA Tournament, and their chances will increase if they win tonight.

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