

Ducks' win clinches playoff berth

By Steve Mims
Emerald Contributor

Oregon's rugby team claimed a playoff berth on Saturday with a 24-7 victory over Washington State.

The Ducks lost their first two games of the season but came back to win their final three games to qualify for the postseason.

The Ducks will host Southern Oregon State April 4 at Southbank Field, with the winner going to Los Angeles for regionals. If Oregon can get past Southern Oregon, the Ducks would face first-ranked California in the opening round of the regionals.

Oregon left no doubt about Saturday's game, taking the opening kickoff 50 yards and scoring 30 seconds later. The Ducks overpowered the Cougars all day, wearing them out early and never letting them back in the game.

The Ducks' road to the regionals looked bleak after winter break when losses to Oregon State and Washington put them in the Northwest League cellar. They came back in February know-

ing they had to win their final three games to make it to postseason play, and that is just what they did.

The Ducks defeated Western Washington and then came from behind to defeat Central Washington two weeks ago, setting up their match with Washington State for the second playoff spot in the league.

The Ducks and Southern Oregon have met in rugby before, with Oregon winning every time. Southern Oregon has added members of its football team to bulk up their front line and will need it to compete with Oregon's powerful forwards.

Oregon head coach Bob Snyder knows his team is physically tough enough to play with anyone in the West, but he said the Ducks have to improve on the mental aspect to compete.

"Our mental preparation doesn't last for the entire game," Snyder said. "Anyone can be beat, we just have to play our best for 80 minutes."

Oregon's worst example of this came against Central Washington, when the Ducks blew a 16-0 halftime lead. The Ducks fell behind 18-16 before scoring late to win it 22-18.



Photo by Jeff Paslay
Despite a bleak winter, the Ducks came back with a 24-7 victory over Washington State Saturday, advancing the team to the playoffs.

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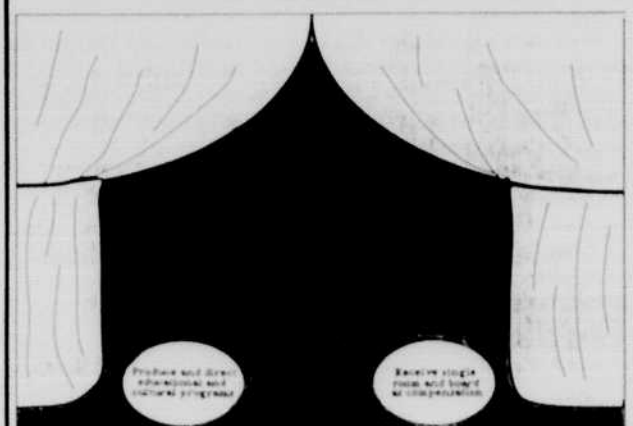
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