

Duck softball coach makes Team USA

By Jayson Jacoby
Emerald Sports Reporter

Oregon softball fans this spring who noticed pitching coach Michele Smith limping out to the first base coaching box probably associated her with the coaching and not the playing side of the game.

They were wrong. The coach may have hobbled around during the Ducks' season, but on June 10, Smith will be in Tokyo representing the United States as a member of the Team USA softball squad.

Smith, a three-year assistant to Oregon head coach Tami Brown, made the national team after being picked as an Amateur Softball Association first-team All-American last year.

"I'm really excited," Smith said. "This is going to be an exciting summer."

Brown, who also has international experience, said Smith deserves to be on Team USA.

"She's one of the greatest pitchers going right now," Brown said.

Smith's strongest suit is pitching, but she may also hit and possibly play first base or the outfield for Team USA.

"She's one of the best hitters in the country," Brown said.

Despite her eagerness to compete on an international level, Smith is anything but a newcomer to big-time softball success.

As a standout at Oklahoma State from 1985-88, she was named to several All-Big 8 and All-American teams. She was also nominated in 1991 for the Broderick Award, softball's version of college football's Heisman trophy given annually to the nation's top collegiate player.

And as Brown's teammate on the ASA Redding Rebels, Smith was named the ASA's player of the year a year ago.

Still, Smith isn't downplaying her latest honor.

"I've always wanted to represent the U.S.," she said.

Smith is in some ways lucky to be healthy enough to play this summer. She spent most of the spring recovering from surgery to remove bone spurs from under her achilles tendon.

Smith said the removal of part of her heel bone has alleviated the chronic pain that plagued her for years. She said a strong pitching performance two weeks ago against the Chinese national team helped buoy her confidence.

"I got really scared for a while and thought I wasn't ready for this," Smith said. "But I pitched fairly well (against the Chinese team). I should be back to 100 percent by the time we leave (for Tokyo)."

Although Smith said she would like to be a part of the U.S. Olympic softball team, she isn't sure she can wait until 1996 when softball will debut as a full medal sport.

"That's a once-in-a-lifetime situation," Smith said. "But I'm not sure how much longer I'll play. There's a good chance I'll retire at the end of this season."

Smith, who has a degree in health and wellness from Oklahoma State, is finishing up undergraduate requirements at Oregon this spring. She wants to attend medical school and is looking at Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland.

Smith, who was a first-team academic All-Big 8 selection at Oklahoma State, said her academic achievements will determine the future of her softball career.

"A lot will depend on what happens in my medical career," Smith said. "The problem is that pitching is a year-round position to prepare for. You can't just take a few swings and be ready to play."

"It's hindering to play and also pursue a career."

Smith and Team USA will finish their Far East tour June 28 and return to the U.S. the next day.

nounced his retirement from the NBA last November, Johnson has become an expert on just about every subject known to mankind. Turn on the television and there's Magic, discussing everything from fast breaks to the Rodney King verdict.

Whatever skills Johnson may have in other endeavors, he doesn't shine as a basketball announcer.

Magic's mastery of the game on the court would lead one to believe that he, too, knows what things mean. But until he learns how to tell his viewers, I'll stick to Bill Schonely's colorful radio broadcasts.

Jayson Jacoby is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

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are looking at. It's a difficult decision," he said.

Candrea's explanation simply doesn't hold water, however, when McCall's and Manning's Pac-10 stats are considered.

McCall hit .322 and Manning .308.

Back to head-scratching time. A suggestion for NBC: Stop using Magic Johnson as a color commentator for NBA playoff broadcasts.

For all Johnson contributed to basketball, and all he is contributing to the AIDS awareness movement, he simply doesn't give viewers what they want to hear.

It seems that since he an-

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