

PICKS

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recruiter, bad with Xs and Os. That's the rap on Frieder. He may have unknowns on his team, but he always finds a way to draw talent.

If the Sun Devils want to finish any higher than sixth, though, they better get their act together. They lost to Northeastern Illinois and Saint Louis in the preseason. It's not talent that's questionable on this team, it's character.

California: 2-0, 9-2 — Cal coach Todd Bozeman did a phenomenal job last year after the controversial firing of coach Lou Campanelli in February. Bozeman led his

team to a 9-1 record during the last month of the regular season, and then picked up wins over LSU and two-time defending champion Duke in the NCAA tournament.

After opening the 1993 season 2-2, the Golden Bears have put together a seven-game winning streak and are off to a 2-0 start in the conference. The Bears' leader is sophomore Jason Kidd, who has lived up to the incredible expectations put upon him in high school.

"Jason is more aware of situations on the floor and is controlling the floor a lot better and shooting the ball better," Bozeman said.

There is a lot of talent alongside Kidd in Berkeley, particularly forward Lamond Murray, who scored more than 30 points in consecutive games last week. Murray leads the conference in scoring (24.9) and is seventh in rebounding (6.9). Alfred Grigsby and Ryan Jamison add depth up front, along with Monty Buckley and Randy Duck in the backcourt.

Mims' Forecast — The Bears have the top scorer and playmaker in the conference in the deadly combination of Murray and Kidd. More importantly, this team has the kind of confidence a



California guard Jason Kidd has shown no signs of a sophomore jinx, leading the Pac-10 in assists (9.1) and steals (3.5) per game.

young team can only get from winning in the big show.

This team is better than last year, and the only question is, are past problems put away? A lot of turmoil and criticism hit Berkeley last year when Campanelli was fired, but Bozeman put that aside in the best manner possible: by winning. Bozeman quickly pushed aside any talk of recurring problems during the preseason teleconference, but to prove it they must continue to win. I'm a believer.

Charbonneau's Forecast — Enough about Kidd already! Yeah,

he's a good player, but this team will live and die by how Murray performs. Murray is the most complete front-line player in the conference, and if he plays the way he did during the second half of last season, Cal could challenge for at least the No. 2 position in the conference.

But then there's the other problem with this team: It seems as though Bozeman is just a little too lackadaisical in his approach toward the team that got their coach fired last year. Once a team of troublemakers, always a team of troublemakers. This team did remarkable things when Bozeman took over last season, but Bozeman is no longer a savior. He's the coach, and how well the Cal players deal with that will have a lot to do with how well this team performs.

Wishful thinking: The high and mighty Jason Kidd will do an interview that isn't after a game.

Simonson's Forecast — Forget about last year's performance in the tournament. It was the kind of run fueled by emotion (SEE: Loyola-Marymount; Gathers, Hank; 1990) and a coaching change (SEE: Michigan; Fisher, Steve; 1989) that happens occasionally but can rarely be duplicated.

Kidd isn't the second coming of Kenny Anderson or Tim Hardaway. He isn't the athlete those players are, but he's a smart player whose basketball instincts and floor awareness are second to none. Is he a leader? Does Kidd make everyone around him better? Sometimes. Does he make them good enough to win the conference? Not this year.

Cal and UCLA may end up in a tie for second place if Cal comes to play night in and night out against quality opponents. The Golden Bears will win a game in the NCAA tournament if they get a break from the selection committee.

Oregon: 0-2, 4-7 — The Ducks have been inconsistent, to put it mildly, through the first month of the season. Oregon opened the year 1-4 before improving at the Far West Classic in Portland, followed by wins against St. Mary's and Alaska-Fairbanks. Although the Ducks opened the Pac-10 season with a

pair of losses, they looked respectable against fifth-ranked UCLA and grabbed a second-half lead at USC.

Oregon's six newcomers have all had their moments, but freshman point guard Kenya Wilkins has looked the most comfortable on the floor, scoring 9.6 points per game to go along with four assists. Junior guard Orlando Williams has struggled with his shot but still leads the team in scoring at 17.4 points per game, and forward Jeff Potter has recovered from an elbow injury to contribute.

Mims' Forecast — Oregon showed its improvement in its recent losses to UCLA and USC, but problems still remain. One problem is inside, where the Ducks have had problems getting the ball on offense, and rebounding it on either side of the court.

Compounding this problem is that scoring is not coming from the outside either. Williams and junior Jordy Lyden were counted on to hit the long shots, but have not done that so far. Oregon is shooting just more than 42 percent from the floor, and that will not win many Pac-10 games. The Ducks showed signs of improving these percentages late in the preseason, but will need to do even more.

Charbonneau's Forecast — Last year I picked the Ducks to go 9-9 in the Pac-10. Oops.

This season, the Ducks definitely have more talent, but it's young talent, whereas last season they had a lot of players that just didn't belong in the Pac-10, or the NCAA for that matter.

How well Oregon does this season will depend on how the newcomers adjust to the rigors of playing consistently tough teams night in and night out. A few players like Kenya Wilkins and Henry Madden have shown the maturity it takes to hold their own in the Pac-10. Others, like Darryl Parker and Zach Sellers, are just starting to adjust and contribute to the team.

This team will not win many games if they have to rely on Williams, Runyon, Potter and Johnson to do all the work. They proved that last year. More than any team in the Pac-10, the Ducks must have a balanced attack if they want to win some games. I'm a firm believer in Green's system,

but this team is still getting to know each other. The quicker they do that, the sooner they can start winning.

One promise: Oregon will beat either Arizona or UCLA at McArthur Court this season.

Simonson's Forecast — The Ducks are only one player away from making the NCAA tournament, but that player's name is Glenn Robinson and he's a little busy in Indiana right now.

Oregon needs two things to happen in order finish higher than ninth in the conference this season. First, the Ducks need to learn how to win. The Ducks are capable of being in most of the games they play, but they won't overwhelm anybody with their talent. Oregon needs to prove it's capable of playing smart by keeping its poise and not beating itself.

Second, Oregon needs to find some consistency. The Ducks do a good job of taking shots; they need to do a better job of making them. Oregon needs to find two or three players who can shoot the ball consistently and can be counted on to score in double figures every game.

Oregon State: 0-2, 4-7 — The Beavers suffered a serious blow to their chances this year when one of their top returnees, forward Mustapha Hoff, and their best newcomer, freshman Sonny Benjamin, were both lost for the season because of injuries. How much Benjamin would have meant to the team is unknown, but Hoff was expected to be a team leader and improve on his 9.5 points and 4.5 rebounds per game of a year ago.

"(Hoff's injury) was the biggest blow we had because he was our best returnee statistically," Oregon State coach Jimmy Anderson said. "His loss will hurt us in all aspects of our game."

The early season got embarrassing for the Beavers when they were beaten soundly by NAIA Oklahoma Baptist. Oregon State turned it around in time to continue its dominance of the Far West Classic, but the Pac-10 season got off to a rough start with a 104-71 loss at UCLA.

The Beavers need a big year from guard Brent Barry to do much. Barry, a 6-foot-6, 185-pound junior nicknamed "Bones" because of his slim build, has tremendous passing and dribbling skills, but his outside shot is still suspect.

Mims' Forecast — Oregon State fans have reason for hope, the season is over in just more than two months. That is when Beaver fans can look forward to the 1994-95 season, which is much more promising. Only one problem, will Anderson be around to see it?

Oregon State will win its share of games this year, but next year they return practically the whole team intact. In addition, Hoff, Benjamin and forward J.D. Vetter should return from injuries. So, Beaver fans, look for continued improvement from the youngsters and J.C. transfers, because with a few additions, the 1994-95 group should repay your loyalty for wading through this year.

Charbonneau's Forecast — It's very refreshing to see the Beavers have as bad of a team as Oregon and have virtually no chance of making it into the postseason. But it took a gaggle of injuries to put Oregon State in that position.



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