

PICKS

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Simonson.

Simonson's Forecast — Go see Lorenzo Orr. Get there for warmups. Does he have much of a team around him? Not really, but George Raveling's teams are capable of challenging anyone in the conference on any given night.

As a result, USC will beat some teams it shouldn't and finish respectably in the standings. Take heart Oregon schools: The Trojans will also get pounded by

some teams it shouldn't lose to. If power rankings are worth anything, the Trojans won't make the NAAs. If wins and losses count, USC is in — then out in a hurry.

Washington: 0-2, 2-9 — First-year coach Bob Bender is already cracking out the "good effort" quotes, which means only one thing: The Huskies are not good.

"I can't fault our effort thus far," he said. "But we need to work on our concentration and

execution."

Not to mention recruiting and attendance. Bender's in the same position Jerry Green was in last season. He's taken over a bad team and must wait a couple of years before he gets players that will help him turn the program around.

Mims' Forecast — What is there to say, the Huskies aren't good and have reservations for the Pac-10 cellar. Quick trivia question: Name two Washington basketball players? Anyone who can do this in less than one day wins two tickets to any Washington home game — plenty of good seats available.

Charbonneau's Forecast — I could go out on a limb and say the Huskies will win more than three games, but I won't.

It could happen: Oregon's first sweep of a Pac-10 team since 1990-91.

Simonson's Forecast — How bad is Washington? During home games, students in groups of five keep running up to the scorer's table and saying, "We've got next game."

Washington might as well be on probation in basketball as well as in football. Nobody knows who's playing for them and nobody cares. They're the worst thing to happen to Seattle since Pearl Jam.

Washington State: 0-2, 10-4 — Still another team that has to prove itself in Pac-10 play. If last

weekend's performances against Stanford and Cal are any indication, the Cougars will be average at best.

However, unlike Stanford and USC, whose non-conference records may be a hoax, the Cougars fared well against some stiff competition. Washington State defeated Michigan State, Marquette, Alabama, Eastern Michigan and lost by only five points at Indiana.

"I thought we were playing well," head coach Kelvin Sampson said of the Cougars' big start, "but then I saw UCLA and Ari-



FILE PHOTO

WSU forward Mark Hendrickson, who surprised a lot of people during his freshman campaign a year ago, ranks second in the conference with 9.2 rebounds per game this year.

zona play and realized we have some work to do."

Forward Mark Hendrickson and guard Eddie Hill are the leaders for the team this year, and with only three newcomers, Sampson has a team of players who know his system.

"I see us fighting for the fourth or fifth spot this season," Sampson said.

Mims' Forecast — The Cougars aren't as good of a team as many thought they were after beginning the year 7-0. The Cougars have talented players in Hendrickson, Hill, Tony Harris and freshman Isac Fontaine, but not enough depth.

The Cougars will beat one of the Big 3 in the conference at some point this year, but that will be the highlight. Will the fifth-place team in the conference go to the tournament? Not with a .500 conference record.

Charbonneau's Forecast — I'm impressed with the way the Cougars have played thus far, and they have a chance to get a big

boost if they did actually beat UCLA last night in Pullman. If they lost, it's tough for a team to start with three straight losses and then climb back into the race. But what race are the Cougars actually in? A shot at the Pac-10 title is not going to happen, but a shot at No. 3 or 4 is definitely something the Cougars are capable of.

PR Wizardry: The motto on the cover of the Washington State media guide: Shootin' and Slammin'. Wow!

Simonson's Forecast — This is a veteran ballclub that has played together. Mark the Cougars down as the fourth-place team in the conference and give them an NCAA tournament berth.

The Cougars won't get a lot of respect, either inside the conference or out, but they're a solid basketball team that should produce some solid results. They won't be confused with UCLA and Arizona, but this isn't a good year for the Pac-10, so being average is good enough.



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