

Olson clears air as Arizona prepares for Arkansas

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Before his team began its preparations for the second Final Four trip in school history, Arizona coach Lute Olson still had to clear the air with the media.

Olson criticized the press and fair-weather fans before the nets came down Saturday after the Wildcats' victory over Missouri in the West Regional final.

"I did that for the players and the abuse that the players have taken," Olson said Monday. "The players are thankful that I did it."

"I did it; it's over with," he said. "This is Final Four week, and it's all love and hugs and kisses."

The Wildcat coach fielded numerous questions regarding his comments televised immediately after the Arizona victory and later in the postgame news conference.

"I may be the dumbest coach in the world, I may not know how to motivate, but when you start attacking my players, you'll get my wrath," Olson said. "That's my family."

After the 92-72 win over Missouri that put Arizona into the national semifinals for the first time since 1988, Olson attacked the media for making it "probably the worst year of his life," having to deal with the criticism after the Wildcats' early exits from the NCAA tournament two years in a row.

Olson said Monday he had no problem with most of the reporters but isn't above carrying a grudge if it is deserved.

"I said what I said on Saturday because the time was right and I needed to get that burden off of (the players') backs and off of my back."

The players apparently haven't felt

much of that burden.

"It just rolls off us," said guard Reggie Geary. "We understand what we're capable of. We believe in ourselves, even though some people don't."

Senior Khalid Reeves, who has averaged 29 points a game in the tournament and was Arizona's leading scorer in the regular season, said the team deserves some of the criticism.

"It really doesn't bother me," he said. "When you're expected to do more than you do, you have to take that heat. I guess it just comes with the territory."

Olson also said he was happy at Arizona and had no plans of retiring. On Saturday, when asked if the criticism was enough to make him leave, he said, "If I could take our players with us, you're damn right I would."

On Monday, he said: "I don't think I've

ever had more energy than this year. I know that when the time comes, I have other things I can do and will be successful doing and will enjoy doing it."

As far as the matchup with Arkansas in the semifinals, Olson said he wasn't necessarily expecting a press from the quick Razorbacks.

"I really thought (Arkansas) disrupted (Michigan) more with their half-court defense," Olson said. "I think Michigan expected the full-court pressure. We're probably not expecting the full-court pressure, but they may throw the curveball at us, too."

Arizona has fought off the press with touted guards Damon Stoudamire, Reeves and Geary.

"If (Arkansas) wants to (press), they have to deal with the quickness of our three guards," Geary said.

Williams named most valuable; tennis team wins four in S.C.

Oregon basketball player Orlando Williams was named the winner of the Steven J. Award as the most valuable player for the 1993-94 season during the team's awards banquet at the Valley River Inn on

Athlete Award for combining academics and athletics, and junior Jon Mitchell picked up the academic award with the top grade-point average (3.76) on the squad.

The Oregon men's tennis team went 4-1 over spring break, raising its overall record to 14-7.

The Ducks spent the break in South Carolina, where they defeated Wright State, Northern Iowa, Jacksonville and DePaul. Their only loss of the trip came at the hands of Bowling Green.

Oregon started the trip with an easy 7-0 win over Wright State in a match that saw the Ducks win every set played. The Ducks followed the victory with a 5-2 loss to Bowling Green, but rebounded to shut out Northern Iowa 7-0 two days later. Oregon again won every set and had nine set shutouts.

The Ducks snuck past Jacksonville, thanks to a 9-8 win in the No. 3 doubles match that gave Oregon a 4-3 victory. Oregon concluded the trip with a 4-2 victory over DePaul. The Ducks' Lee Kirner moved into second place on Oregon's all-time victory list and is within one victory of tying for first place.

Stop the press! Jordan hits a double

SARASOTA, Fla. (AP) — Michael Jordan got his first extra base hit of the spring on Tuesday, driving in a run with a double and going 1-for-4 for the Chicago White Sox's Double-A Birmingham team.

With two out and a runner at second in the sixth inning against Jim Haynes, a right-hander for Baltimore's Double-A Bowie team, Jordan hit a 2-2 pitch down the left field line for a double.

The retired Chicago Bulls star is 4-for-19 in five minor league games with three RBIs and two stolen bases. On Tuesday, he was Birmingham's designated hitter.

"My job is to hit and sit," he said.

Jordan popped up to the second baseman in his first at-bat in the second; grounded out to the second baseman in the fifth; and flew out to left in the ninth.

"I just missed it," Jordan said of the final at-bat against hard-throwing Armando Benitez. "That home run would have been a nice little story tomorrow. He came inside and I turned on it. But 'just missed' doesn't count in this league."

A decision on which minor league team Jordan will be placed with was expected Wednesday.

DUCK NOTEBOOK

Monday night.

Williams, a 6-foot-2 junior guard, finished third in the Pacific-10 Conference in scoring, averaging 18.6 points a game, and was named to the all-conference team. As the school record holder in career three-pointers with 188, the Portland native ranks 12th on Ducks' all-time scoring list with 1,160 points.

Freshman point guard Kenya Wilkins was named winner of the Jesse Nash Award for the most improved player. An all-freshman team pick in the Pac-10, Wilkins was among the league leaders in assists, steals and three-point accuracy.

Junior college transfer Darryl Parker was given the John Warren Award as most inspirational player, junior Jeff Potter won the Harry Ritchie Scholar-

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Blazers up ticket prices

PORTLAND (AP) — It's going to cost more to see the only major league game in town.

The Portland Trail Blazers have announced that season tickets are going up by various amounts, depending on whether ticket holders are willing to commit to buying seats for the next six years.

Every general seating area ticket will go up next season from 8 to 25 percent. The six-year plan guarantees prices through the 1999-2000 season.

By then, Blazer officials say, a ticket that costs \$15 per game this season will be \$24.85 for fans who pledge now for six years and \$36.30 for those who renew year-by-year.

Today's \$46.50 seat will rise to \$89.90 or \$142.80 by 1999-2000.

Prices for about 3,200 seats in the team's new arena will be frozen through 1999-2000, mostly at \$13 or \$15. About 1,200 of those seats will be sold on a single-game basis. Of those, 200 will be priced at \$5.

Officials of the Blazers and Oregon Arena Corp. met with about 4,700 of the team's season ticket holders Sunday to discuss the price hike. They also explained how fans will be relocated when the new 20,340-seat arena opens in October 1995.

The best seats will go to those who have held season tickets the longest.

Team and arena officials have noted that ticket prices have gone up an average of 9 percent annually the past five years. The average annual increase over the next six years will be about 14 percent for fans who renew on a year-to-year basis but only 7.5 percent for those who sign up this summer for the next six years.

A meeting with a second group of season ticket holders is scheduled for April 17.