

Rain, rain go away so softball can play Saturday

By Steve Mims
Oregon Daily Emerald

If you hear strange things inside the Casanova Center this week, it's probably just Oregon softball coach Tami Brown doing a sun dance.

The Ducks have been off for the past two weeks watching the rain wash away games against Portland State and Puget Sound. Brown is hopeful the weather will allow her squad to face seventh-ranked California in a doubleheader Saturday at Howe Field, but wishes she could have had some games to help get her team game-tough.

"Actually if the rain would subside now, it would be wonderful," Brown said. "The weather is better than last year, but we needed those games to stay conditioned."

California has dominated Oregon in the past, winning 35 of 47 games in the all-time series, but the Ducks served notice last month that they are gaining on the Golden Bears. After getting beat 10-0 in the first game of a doubleheader at Berkeley, the Ducks got a hit from Jennifer

Piper in the seventh inning of the second game to score Laura Schmidt, giving the Ducks a 1-0 victory.

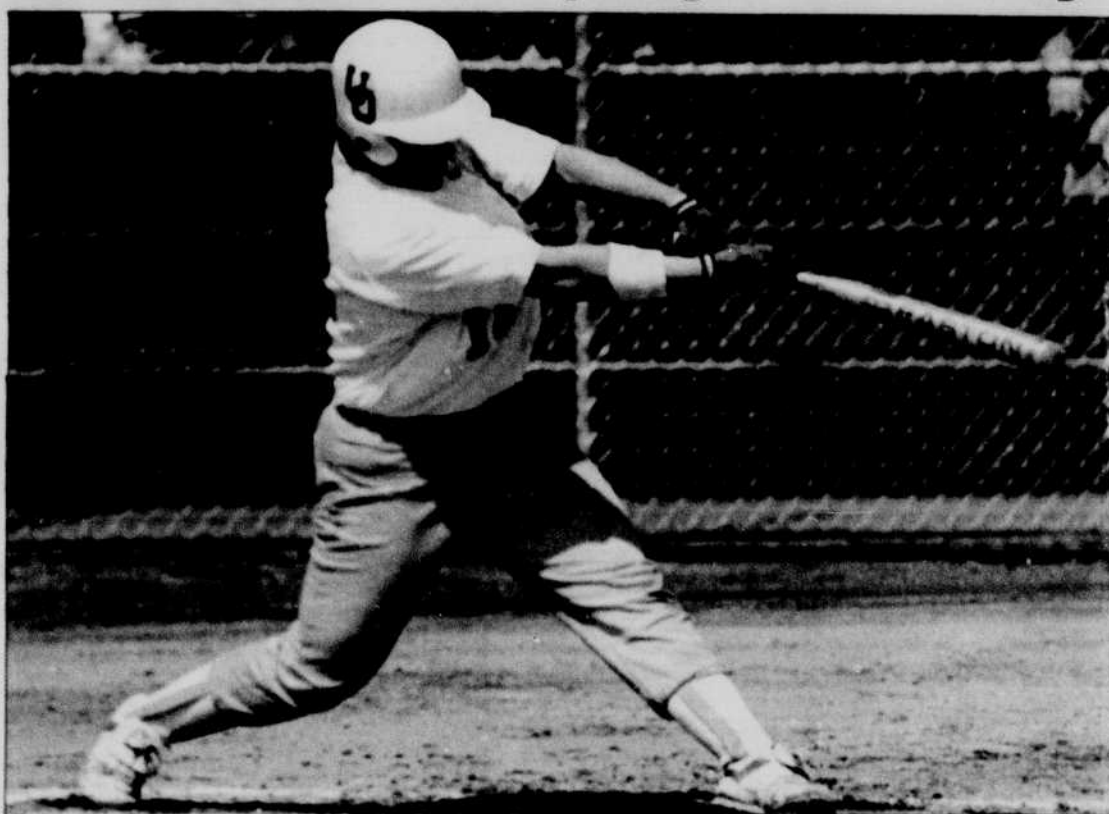
It was that win that moved the Ducks into their current No. 17 ranking nationally, but the Ducks had been beating impressive opponents all season. Brown gave her team a difficult preseason schedule and hopes the competition pays off this weekend.

"The schedule was tough, but that's why I did it," Brown said. "With a young team, they need to know early what they'll compete against in the Pac-10. I think it helped a lot and I expect us to pick up where we left off."

The Ducks won 16 of 24 preseason games, including a 7-8 record against ranked opponents. Oregon began to serve notice to the country with wins over No. 18 Utah State, No. 23 Sacramento State and ninth-ranked UNLV at the Spring Fling in February.

The Ducks are 20-12 overall this year and 6-4 in the Pacific-10 Conference after a split with No. 12 Washington earlier this month. The Ducks best hitters,

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Oregon catcher Laura Schmidt is closing in on school records for triples, home runs and RBI's.

Sights and sounds of Eugene

Time for a quick trip across campus. First stop, Centennial Boulevard where the Oregon football team is hard at work preparing for the 1994 season. Spring drills mean different things to different teams, but for the Ducks it is impossible to practice what they would like to master the most: coming from behind to win a game.

This is one of the main goals the Ducks have set for next season, but since they are only facing each other, it's impossible. Or is it? Actually, if the Ducks split into two teams, giving one team a 21 point deficit with 30 minutes left, one of two things would happen.

Either the offense would finally get a come-from-behind win, or the defense would stop them, proving they have the mental framework to keep a lead.

Since the above is doubtful, the Ducks do have major work to do this spring to see if they have enough depth to be competitive next year. The Duck's starting unit should be as good as usual in 1994, but serious questions remain about the depth.

On offense, the biggest question is the line, where only Steve Hardin has started more than one game in college. Three sophomores and a junior are penciled in atop the depth chart entering spring, but none have much experience in games. The Ducks need to find out this spring if the Bob Baldwins and Mark Greggs are ready to step in, because if not, quarterback Danny O'Neil could be an easy target and there is no experience behind him either.

Defensively, the biggest question mark is at linebacker, where only Jeremy Asher and Rich Ruhl have started in college. How big are the holes at linebacker? Other than Ruhl and Asher, only Reggie Jordan returns after playing more than 100 plays at linebacker. Jordan



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and Paul Jensen, who are No. 1 on the depth chart at left and right linebacker, respectively, combined for 11 tackles last season.

Next, let's head across the street to the Casanova Center, where it's been reported that the Oregon hierarchy is mulling over the idea of adding an eighth women's sport in the interest of gender equity.

I've used this space before to belittle the idea of adding another money-losing sport on campus, but since it's apparently going to happen anyway, let's consider the possibilities.

The three sports Oregon is said to be checking into are swimming, crew and soccer, three enormously popular spectator sports, especially for college students. Since I doubt anyone can give the rules for how swimming and crew are played or scored on the collegiate level, let's pay attention to the probable choice, soccer.

Soccer does have its positives, like the fact that people know how it is played. In addition, there are seven Pacific-10 Conference schools that currently have women's soccer, as well as in-state opponent Portland, which has built a highly competitive product.

However, judging from the crowds at the women's club soccer games I watched two years ago, I don't think there has been an outcry for this sport on campus. Even those who did attend the games two years ago probably hope it doesn't become a Division I sport, because they

won't be able to bring their six-packs of Henry's to the game anymore.

Finally, let's head over to Howe Field where the 17th-ranked Oregon softball team plays its games. In the spirit of Track Town U.S.A., we'll jog from the Cas Center over there, on the way passing Southbank Field where the Oregon women's club soccer team is practicing in front of a sellout crowd.

At Howe Field I realize there probably won't be a big crowd here either when the Ducks face No. 7 California this Saturday, and that's too bad. If the weather cooperates, which it rarely does, Saturday's game should be pretty entertaining.

California is the first big-time team to face Oregon at home in two years, although UCLA practiced on the field last year before the game was canceled. The Golden Bears bring a 30-15 record, a national reputation and the powerful duo of Gillian Boxx and Kendall Richards, who have combined to hit over .400 this year, into the field to face an Oregon team that has beaten seven ranked opponents on its way to gaining national respect.

Earlier this year, the Ducks came back from a 10-0 defeat in the first game of a doubleheader to shock the Bears 1-0 in the second game for a win that pushed the Ducks into the national spotlight.

It should be a good doubleheader, and a great chance for all those fighting for equality in women's sports to show up and exhibit the type of excitement that will await our soon-to-be-announced eighth women's sport.

Of course, those of you attending the swim meet at Leighton Pool are excused.

Steve Mims is the Sports Editor of the Emerald.



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What do Bonnie Raitt, Alice in Chains, Pearl Jam, Whitney Houston and Garth Brooks have in common?

A. They all have female names
B. They all sang backup for Elvis Presley
C. They all graduated from the University of Oregon
D. They all have music videos on TV-53*

*TV-53: An interactive, music video, broadcast television station NOT on the cable. "It's Your Call."

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