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Pac-10 tourney crucial for Ducks

By Steve Mims

The Oregon men's golf team begins the crucial part of its season this week when it travels to Tucson, Ariz., for the Pacific-10 Conference Championships at Tucson National Golf Course

The Ducks are on the bubble for the Western Regional championships in two weeks and need a strong showing at the conference tournament to solidify themselves as one of the top 12 teams in the Far West that advance to the regional tourna-

The Ducks have been up and down this season. They started poorly but came on strong near the end - only to finish 12th at their last tournament.

Oregon finished tenth or worse in its first three tournaments. The Ducks began to turn it around when they finished third at their own tournament, the Duck Invitational in March.

From there, Oregon finished eighth at the Pacific Coast Invitational, followed by a fourth and fifth place finish at the Southwestern and Western Invitational tournaments, respectively. The Ducks finished 12th in their last two tournaments, the Thunderbird Invitational and U.S. Intercollegiate.

The format for the conference tournament is different than most tournaments the Ducks played during the season. At the Pac-10 meet, four rounds are played during three days - instead of the usual two-day, three-round tournaments the Ducks

Each team also will take six players to the tournament and count the top five scores each round. one more than most tournaments.

Junior Ted Snavely has lead the Ducks, finishing in the top 11 at five of the team's seven tourna-

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ments this spring. Snavely is also the Ducks' top returnee from last year's Pac-10 tournament, where he finished 34th

Senior Randy McCracken and juniors Paul Regali and Andy Scheidt will join freshmen Joel Stock and J.J. Astorquia to fill out the Ducks' lineup. McCracken is the only other Duck who has experience at the Pac-10 tourney, finishing 49th a

The Ducks have consistently finished in the middle of the pack at the conference tournament. They have finished between fourth and sixth place every year since 1987, including a sixth-place finish last year.

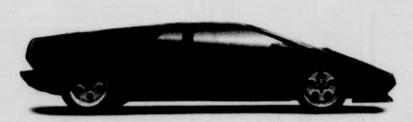
The Ducks have never won the tournament and aren't expected to this year. No. 2 Arizona State, third-ranked Stanford and No. 11 Arizona should battle for the team title, but the rest of the field is

The Ducks haven't had an individual win in the tournament since the conference expanded to 10 teams in 1979. Some of the favorites this year are expected to be defending champion Jason Gore of Arizona, 1993 NCAA champion Todd Dempsey of Arizona State and his teammate Larry Barber, as well as Stanford's Casey Martin and Notah Begay.

The tournament begins this morning with 18 holes, followed by 36 holes Tuesday before the final round begins Wednesday morning.

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