

Favorites at NCAA tourney come from the West

By Steve Mims
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Fall Preview wasn't exactly that.

The tournament, held last September at Oregon Golf Club, was supposed to bring together the top NCAA women's golf teams to test out the course that year's NCAA Championships will be played on, and give an idea of how the tournament sizes up.

This year's Fall Preview was scheduled for 54 holes, but was shortened to 36 due to the amount of time it took to finish the first round. The course also played more difficult than desired, causing changes to be made before the NCAA Championship begins this morning.

"The course was real difficult, so we made some changes to make it a little easier," Oregon head coach Lara Mack said. "The scores will be high for nationals, but I still think the true champion will shine."

The two-year old Oregon Golf Club in West Linn, known for its tough hills, will play at par 72, 5,985 yards. The tournament could come down to the final hole, the par 5, 449 yard 18th hole.

The difficulty of the course

led to sky-high scores at the Fall Preview, as Arizona State won the tournament with a two-round total of 638. If that pace continues this week, Arizona State's four-round score would be 1276, 89 strokes more than the Sun Devils needed to win last year's NCAA tourney.

Arizona State's Wendy Ward won the individual title at the Fall Preview with a 6-over-par 150 for only two rounds. Last year's NCAA champion Charlotte Sorenstam won with a four-round total of 5-under-par.

Victories by the Sun Devils and Ward may be the only part of the tournament that was a preview of what happens this week. Arizona State is ranked No. 1 in the nation and is the favorite to repeat as champion, but will face some serious challenges.

"Most people favor ASU, but I think there's three other teams with a good shot to win as well," Mack said. "They are Stanford, San Jose State and USC."

USC head coach Renee Baumgartner, who coached Oregon from 1987-93, agreed with Mack, who is not only her successor at Oregon, but her sister as well.

"I think Arizona State, San Jose State, Stanford and us have a chance to win," Baumgartner said. "I honestly don't foresee anyone else winning."

The balance of power in college golf resides in the West, where the top six teams in the country play. Following top-ranked Arizona State in the latest poll is No. 2 San Jose State, third-ranked USC, fourth-ranked UCLA, No. 5 Stanford and sixth-ranked Texas.

"I think West is best and will dominate," Baumgartner said. "I think Wake Forest and Duke from the East are in a position to finish in the top 10, but not the top five."

The results from the East and West Regionals two weeks ago bear out Baumgartner's feelings. Wake Forest won the East regional with a three-round score of 925, while San Jose State won the West at 877. The top 13 teams at the West regional all bettered the Demon Deacons East-winning score.

Oregon returns to the NCAA Championship for the second consecutive year hoping to improve on its 17th-place finish at last year's tournament. Mack and her team set a goal at the beginning of the year to finish in

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USC head coach

the top 10 at nationals, a mark they still hope to accomplish.

"I think we have a good chance to accomplish top 10," Mack said.

Baumgartner says she also thinks her former team can move into the top half of the 18-team field this week.

"Oregon had a great season," she said. "They are a legitimate top 10 team and several coaches I talked to feel that way too."

The Ducks will send a lineup consisting of senior Cappy Mack, the sister of Baumgartner and Lara Mack, juniors Shannon Hare, Karly Mills and Leigh Casey, and sophomore Christel Tomori to the tournament.

Mills led the team this year with a 77.2 stroke average, followed by Mack and Hare at 77.4 and 77.6, respectively. Mack led the Ducks at the Fall Preview, finishing sixth with a score of 159, and has the Ducks' only tournament victory this season at the Nike Invitational in October.

Tomori averaged 79.2 in seven tournaments, and Casey averaged 79.6.

Ward is the favorite in the individual race and the top returnee from last year's NCAA tournament, where she finished in a third-place tie. The junior from San Antonio, Tex. is the top ranked player in the country, while teammate Emilee Klein is ranked No. 2.

Other top individuals include Jamille Jose of Stanford, Charlotte Eliasson of Oklahoma State, who won the West Regional, San Jose State's Lisa Walton and East Regional winner Erika Wicoff of Indiana.

The tournament begins this morning and continues through Saturday with 18 holes played each day. The final two rounds, Friday and Saturday, will be televised live on Prime Sports Northwest.

Ducks get one more chance at open

A few Oregon track athletes will give it one more try tonight during the Martin Hawkins Open at Hayward Field.

The meet is supposed to be a last chance for athletes to qualify for the NCAA Championships, which begin next Wednesday in Boise, Idaho, but for the Ducks, very few athletes have close enough qualifying marks to even give it a whirl tonight.

Kelly Blair is scheduled to make a tune-up appearance at the meet in a few field events. Blair has already qualified for the NCAA's in the heptathlon where she is defending national champion.

Milena Glusac (3,000) and Kelsey Stellick (javelin) have already eclipsed qualifying marks for the NCAA meet.

Young, Cason join meet

Kevin Young and Andre Cason are returning to Eugene for the 20th Annual Prefontaine Meet on June 4th at Hayward Field.

Young is the 1992 Olympic champion, 1993 World champion and World record holder in the 400-meter hurdles. He was ranked No. 1 in the world in his specialty last year. Young will compete against Australian record holder Nick Ward and former

Oregon runner Bob Gray.

Cason was the No. 1-ranked American and No. 2 in the world in the 100 meters last year. Known for his bullet start, Cason ran an incredible 9.85 wind-aided 100 meters to claim the USA Track & Field Championships in Eugene last June.

Also entering the Prefontaine Classic is miler Bob Kennedy, who won last year's Classic in 3:56.71.

A host of Oregon men's distance runners are on the bubble for an invitation to the NCAA's and may also be running tonight.



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