

DUCKS

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and Notre Dame.

Oregon earlier received just nine votes in the CNN/USA Today poll, effectively pinning the Ducks as the 45th team in the poll.

But the Ducks gained at least the writers' attention, marking the first time a Ducks squad was recognized in the polls since the Dick Harter era.

"I would say I don't care, but I actually do, because I think the University of Oregon needs as much publicity basketball wise as it can," Green said about the prospect of a national ranking after the USC game. "It's one of those things I've got no control of, so I don't worry about it a whole lot."

"Of course the poll you really want to be in is not the one in the first week or two of January, it's the one in the first week or two of March. Because that really tells you who's going there in the NCAA tournament."

The Ducks have powered themselves through the early part of the season, averaging more than 86 points a game and

have opened up the offense, currently ranking second in the Pac-10 in three-point shot attempts with a hefty 249.

Oregon's path to glory will face a series of stiff tests, though, as the Ducks take to the road starting with Saturday's big Civil War matchup in Corvallis.

As satisfied as Green undoubtedly is with the team's first national ranking under his guidance, he is also fully aware of what awaits his red-hot club in the weeks to come.

"We've played two games at home," said Green, "and we go on the road for the next three. I think sometimes it's a little easier playing in your own backyard."

"The key, I think, in the Pac-10 is winning basketball games on the road. I think if you can do that, you put yourself in an excellent position to be in that upper half of the league."

The recent success of the Ducks has built on the tremendous excitement generated by the football team's first trip to the Rose Bowl in 37 years and has resulted in back-to-back sell-outs in the basketball team's first conference home games.

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HENRY

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Noticeably absent from the All-Tournament team was Oregon's Kenya Wilkins, who would later be chosen Pac-10 Player of the Week for his Classic efforts, and Jamal Lawrence, who played outstanding defense against George Washington and hit key three-pointers against Notre Dame to give the Ducks a chance at the title. Both players deserved recognition, but both players were saddled with the same handicap — they played for Oregon.

It was the media who chose the All-Tournament team. Check that, it was the media not covering the Ducks in the Rose Bowl — the media that covers the Oregon State Beavers.

Unfortunately, I was not offered the opportunity to vote so I did the next best thing to express my feelings — I confronted the ignorant FEW who had the guts to hang around for the final press conference. I emphasize few, because most of the gutless wonders slinked out of the Coliseum after registering their votes.

The remaining "intellectuals" shriveled in their chairs and did not speak after my outraged pleas for justice. Classic responses from people like this. These are the same types who send hate mail anonymously and cower when the idea of accountability surfaces.

But as disgusted as I was as I sat in Pasadena awaiting the Rose Bowl, my attitude toward professional sportswriters flip-flopped entirely on Monday when *The Associated Press* voted the Greenballers as part of their top 25.

It took guts and a respect for a program on the rise for the oft-maligned media to recognize the accomplishments of Jerry Green and his Fighting Ducks. Green's program is the first to be nationally recognized since the Dick Harter era when the Ducks were ranked 17th on Feb. 22, 1977.

Oregon is a team that has worked hard for this acknowledgement, one that didn't seem likely following Sunday's coaches poll when the Ducks

were only able to garner nine votes for a No. 45 ranking — up from 52nd place last week.

Respect must be an all or nothing commodity as Oregon leapt from No. 19 to No. 2 in the nation according to the Rating Percentage Index, which rates teams based on winning percentage, schedule and opponent's schedule.

I guess it doesn't matter how Oregon gets respect, so long as it happens.

I'm just impressed that the often clueless media decided to be the ones that used its vote to credit those teams having success in this 1994-95 season. Unlike the coaches, who voted with area bias and prejudged beliefs on basketball programs.

Consider Indiana's position at No. 23 of the coaches poll, even after five losses, and the fact that UCLA received one uninformed vote as the top team in the nation despite losing to Oregon. If the coaches had such disrespect for the Ducks, then why did the Bruins only fall from No. 2 to No. 6 in the nation after losing to this lowly program?

I'm not saying that Oregon is the best team in the nation and all others should kneel at its mercy. I would just like, once and for all, for all these ridiculous polls to have a disclaimer before someone registers a vote.

It should read, Rule No. 1 — all voting is for the current season, not what has happened in the school's history. Rule No. 2 — if you don't know, then ask someone.

And for all you media doubters out there, you're right when you say that the media doesn't always give credit where credit is due. But the alternative isn't that much better, so we'll all just have to deal with it.

As the lovable leprechaun from Penn State warned, "God never promised that someday the world would be fair." Until that day comes, we just have to grin and bear it when people scoff at the idea of Oregon being nationally ranked in the sporting world.

Kris Henry is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

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