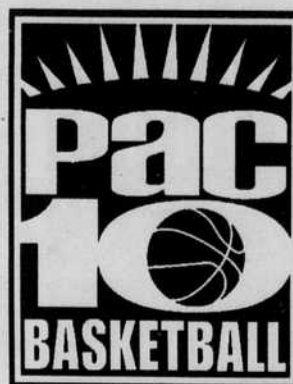


Men's Preview '97



Lute's Wildcats top list, open race thereafter

The fight for position standing in the Pac-10 could be the closest in years, but Arizona should come out on top

Arizona Wildcats

■ **Head Coach:** Lute Olson (13th year)
 ■ **1995-96 Record:** 26-7 overall, 13-5 Pac-10 (2nd)

■ **Key Returnees:** Michael Dickerson, F, 6-5, 190, Jr., 22.8 ppg, 5.6 rpg.; Jason Terry, G, 6-2, 188, So., 12.8 ppg, 6.0 apg.; Miles Simon, G, 6-5, 199, Jr., currently is academically ineligible.

■ **Outlook:** After losing four of five starters, including Simon to academic problems, it appeared as though Arizona might be heading into a rough waters.

No such luck. Olson quickly retooled with true-freshman point guard sensation Mike Bibby and junior college transfer Bennett Davison at power forward. Those two, combined with the sensational play of forward Dickerson, led the Wildcats to a 7-2 non-conference record, including wins against North Carolina, Texas and Utah.

Arizona, barring any major injuries, should win the conference.

■ **Jerry Green comment's:** "Arizona has shown early that they can play with anyone in the country. They are certainly going to be a major force, if not the favorite, in the conference."

Arizona State Sun Devils

■ **Head Coach:** Bill Frieder (7th year)
 ■ **1995-96 Record:** 11-16, 6-12 (8th)

■ **Key Returnees:** Jeremy Veal, G, 6-3, 182, Jr., 18.8 ppg, 5.2 apg.; Roger Farrington, F, 6-7, 210, Sr., 10.0 ppg, 7.5 rpg.

■ **Outlook:** Is this really the same program that was in the Sweet Sixteen just two seasons ago? This will no doubt be Frieder's worst team since he became the Sun Devils' head coach. With graduated guard Ron Riley gone, Arizona State is now

just a one threat team. Veal is the Pac-10's top returning scorer from last season when he averaged 18.9 points per game.

■ **Jerry Green comment's:** "Arizona State has struggled, but Michael Batiste is a great player."

California Golden Bears

■ **Head Coach:** Ben Braun (1st year)
 ■ **1995-96 Record:** 17-11, 11-7 (4th)
 ■ **Key Returnees:** Ed Gray, G, 6-3, 210, Sr., 21.2 ppg, 4.4 rpg.; Randy Duck, G, 6-2, 205, Sr., 10.2 ppg, 3.2 rpg.

Alfred Grigsby, F, 6-8, Sr., 6.9 ppg, 3.2 rpg.

■ **Outlook:** If there were any questions about how tough and unpredictable the Pac-10 will be this year, look no further than Berkeley for the answer. Predicted by some preseason college basketball magazines to finish as low as eighth in the conference, the Bears went 9-2 in non-conference play, losing only to No. 1 Kansas and No. 19 Maryland.

■ **Jerry Green comment's:** "They are certainly a surprise, but I think their talent is as good as anybody in the league with the exception of UCLA and possibly Arizona."

Oregon State Beavers

■ **Head Coach:** Eddie Payne (2nd year)
 ■ **1995-96 Record:** 4-23, 2-16 (10th)

■ **Key Returnees:** Sonny Benjamin, F, 6-6, 202, Jr., 5.2 ppg, 3.6 rpg.

■ **Outlook:** The bad news is that the Beavers won only four of nine non-conference games. The good news is that those four wins equaled the total number of Beaver victories during the entire 1995-96 season.

With a very talented core group of freshman in Corvallis, including prep phenom Corey Benjamin, Oregon State will definitely challenge some teams. But this is a team to look for in the future, when the young guys mature.

■ **Jerry Green comment's:** "They are regreoving. If they can put it together they will win some games."

Stanford Cardinal

■ **Head Coach:** Mike Montgomery
 ■ **1995-96 Record:** 20-9, 12-6 (3rd)
 ■ **Key Returnees:** Brevin Knight, G, 5-10, 173, Sr., 14.0 ppg, 8.0 apg.; Tim Young, C,

7-1, 245, Jr., 16.9 ppg, 8. rpg.

■ **Outlook:** Even after losing four starters from last year's squad, the Cardinal are still expected to compete for the conference title. Why? Because Knight is considered by many to be the best point guard in the nation and Young is putting up big numbers from the center position.

Whether these two can lead this team past Arizona and UCLA still remains to be seen. But what is a sure bet is that they will be in the NCAA tournament come the end of the season.

■ **Jerry Green comment's:** "They are an excellent basketball team with two kids (Knight and Young) that could be playing in the NBA one day."

UCLA Bruins

■ **Head Coach:** Steve Lavin (1st year)
 ■ **1995-96 Record:** 23-8, 16-2 (1st)

■ **Key Returnees:** Toby Bailey, G, 6-5, 205, Jr., 13.0 ppg, 5.3 rpg.; Charles O'Bannon, F, 6-5, 209, Sr., 14.6 ppg, 6.0 rpg.; Jelani McCoy, C, 6-10, 220, 11.5 ppg, So., 6.3 rpg.; J.R. Henderson, F, 6-9, 223, Jr., 14.6 ppg, 6.2 rpg.; Kris Johnson, G-F, 6-3, 222, Jr., 12.7 ppg, 3.1 rpg.

■ **Outlook:** On paper, there is no question that UCLA has the most talented starting line-up in the Pac-10. Three starters are being projected as first-round NBA draft picks next summer. But while skills are abundant, leadership amongst the players is almost non-existent as is their respect for Lavin and his interim status.

■ **Jerry Green comment's:** "They've got seven really outstanding players. I do think they will miss (fired head coach Jim) Harrick in tough situations."

USC Trojans

■ **Head Coach:** Henry Bibby (1st full season)
 ■ **1995-96 Record:** 11-19, 4-14 (9th)
 ■ **Key Returnees:** Stais Boseman, G, 6-4, 200, Sr., 15.7 ppg, 3.8 apg.; Jaha Wilson, F, 6-5, 210, Sr., 12.0 ppg, 7.2 rpg.

■ **Outlook:** A week ago, this team looked as if it was going to be fighting it out with OSU and ASU for a spot in the Pac-10 cel-

lar. But after last weekend's impressive stompings of Washington and Washington State, USC has turned some heads.

Roderick Rhodes, the underachieving transfer from Kentucky has proven that he is much more than just a malcontent, leading the Trojans in scoring with 16 points per game.

■ **Jerry Green Comment's:** "They have good returning players. If they can put it together, they could be dangerous."

Washington Huskies

■ **Head Coach:** Bob Bender (3rd year)
 ■ **1995-96 Record:** 16-12, 9-9 (Tied for 5th)

■ **Key Returnees:** Mark Sanford, F, 6-8, 200, Jr., 15.8 ppg, 7.4 rpg.; Todd MacCulloch, C, 7-0, 270, So., 15.2 ppg, 6.6 rpg.; Jamie Booker, G, 6-3, 190, Sr., 12.0 ppg, 4.5 apg.

■ **Outlook:** One of the Pac-10's up-and-coming teams. But if they want to compete with the big boys they will have to win on the road, which they were incapable of doing last weekend in Los Angeles.

But with one of the conference's premier players in Sanford and a possible twin tower line-up of MacCulloch and 7-foot-1 Patrick Femerling, the Huskies will be an intimidating force to contend with.

■ **Jerry Green comment's:** "Washington has tremendous size inside and they play awfully good at home."

Washington State Cougars

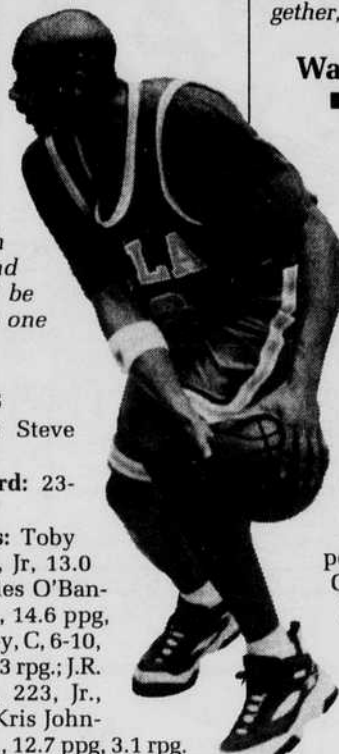
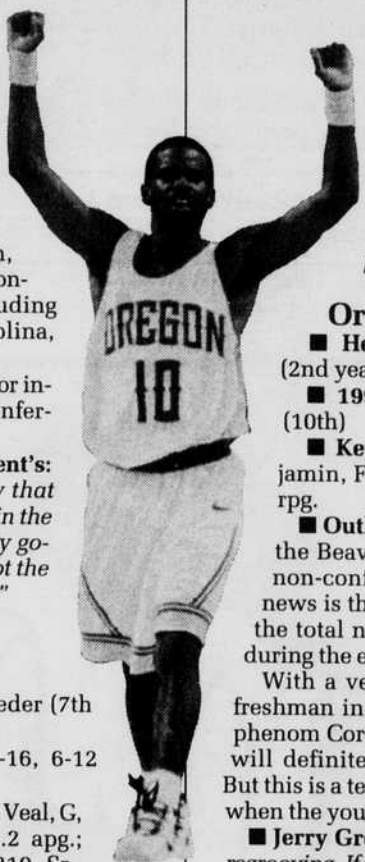
■ **Head Coach:** Kevin Eastman (2nd year)
 ■ **1995-96 Record:** 17-12, 8-10 (7th place)

■ **Key Returnees:** Isaac Fontaine, G, 6-3, 215, Sr., 20.6 ppg, 4.8 rpg.; Carlos Daniel, F, 6-6, 230, Sr., 12.9 ppg, 7.8 rpg.

■ **Outlook:** Although this team has the premier shooting guard in the Pac-10 in Fontaine, they have little else. But that doesn't necessarily mean they are going to be an easy win, however, because Fontaine and Daniel are capable of carrying the team.

■ **Jerry Green comment's:** "Washington State has two or three excellent players. They are capable of playing anybody in the league."

Emerald sports reporter Chris Hansen compiled and wrote this year's Pac-10 Preview.



Green's Ducks are best of the rest in conference title race

■ **MEN:** Led by Senior Kenya Wilkins, Oregon looks to return to the postseason

By Chris Hansen
 Sports Reporter

■ **Head Coach:** Jerry Green (5th year)

■ **1995-96 Record:** 16-13, 9-9 (Tied for 5th)

■ **1996-1997 Record:** 10-0, 1-0

■ **Outlook:** Off to its best start in 22 years, Oregon is playing like a true conference title contender. Which, if it keeps playing like it is now, isn't such a far-fetched idea. Granted, the Ducks didn't play

the tough non-conference schedule that Arizona did, but they didn't exactly play cupcakes either. No matter how you look at it, Oregon's undefeated record is a thing of beauty and not all that surprising to the Oregon players either.

"Right from the beginning of the year we knew we were going to be good," forward Kyle Milling said. "We're not surprised at all. We knew as a team that we could come out and do it. Everybody else's expectations might be rising, but ours haven't changed."

"At the beginning of the year we said we wanted to be the best

team we could be," guard Kenya Wilkins claimed. "And being undefeated is a great start."

A great start indeed. But the question is, can the Ducks continue to play at this level when the competition becomes stronger? When the teams become Arizona, UCLA and Stanford instead of Boise State, Nevada and San Diego State?

Oregon head coach Jerry Green, for one, said yes.

"I think it takes a while to learn how to win," he said. "When we first came here, this program was an embarrassment. It took a while to tell and convince a group that

they are good enough to beat teams if they play hard and smart.

"We have finally learned how to win. It hasn't been automatic. It has taken a while to develop that attitude."

Of course, it doesn't hurt to have a line-up that is returning all five starters. Wilkins, although not as highly touted as counterpart Brevin Knight at Stanford, has put up better numbers than any other point guard in the Pac-10 thus far, and is easily playing the best basketball of his career. Guard Jamal Lawrence has also been outstanding, averaging nearly 15 points a game and hitting 53

percent from three-point range. Milling is averaging 13 points a game while also grabbing a team-high eight rebounds. Jamar Curry is the fourth starter averaging double-digits in points per game with just over 12.

What has been somewhat of a disappointment so far this year, though, is Oregon's depth. With the exception of Henry Madden, who returned to the team this season after a year away to get academically eligible, the Ducks' bench hasn't played up to expectations.

"I had great hope in Terik

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