

OREGON SOFTBALL



MARK McTYRE/Emerald

Oregon pitcher Jennie Cook and the Ducks will go for their first win of the season over Oregon State today in a doubleheader at Howe Field at 3 p.m. Today's game is the first of five between the Ducks and Beavers to be played in Eugene.

Ducks face Beavers on home turf

■ SOFTBALL:
Oregon will try to beat the Beavers for the first time this season today

By Ryan Halvorsen
Sports Reporter

Oregon is heading into the final stretch of the Pacific-10 Conference softball season and the road starts with in-state rival Oregon State today at Howe Field.

The Ducks, who play 14 games over the next 12 days, will face Oregon State (24-25-1, 1-12) once again Wednesday. The fourth and fifth editions of Civil War will be played on Oregon's home turf for the first time this season, giving the Ducks a chance to even up the series.

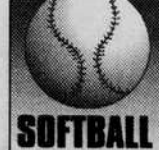
The Beavers are 2-0-1 against Oregon this season, all in Corvallis.

Despite not winning a game against the Beavers this year, the Ducks are still ahead in the standings with two more conference wins.

Oregon (18-27-1 overall, 3-11 Pac-10) is sixth in the Pac-10, while Oregon State is dead last in eighth.

The Oregon players are betting that home-field advantage will be the key to getting that elusive first win against the Beavers.

"We're on a good run right now with our home games," Oregon second baseman Angie LeRoy said. "Playing in your own backyard is a different story. We're extremely fired up for this game."



The last scheduled meeting, April 19, was rained out but has been rescheduled for May 8 in Corvallis.

Oregon State's top gun is Tarrah Beyster. The freshman leads the team with a .409 batting average and is also the Beavers' best pitcher with a 1.77 ERA and 122 strikeouts.

Oregon has been playing without two of its regular starters for the past four games. Shortstop Jill Robinson, who injured her knee more than a week ago, and right fielder Lindsey Welch, who has been sidelined with back spasms, are questionable for this week's games.

The first game of the doubleheader will begin at 3 p.m. with the second game immediately following.

Wheaton will get his chance with Cowboys

He's too slow and too small. That was the report on former Oregon cornerback Kenny Wheaton after the NFL combine in Indianapolis early this year.

Wheaton's showing at the combine, mainly his 4.7 second 40-yard dash time, had reportedly caused his stock to drop.

My, how times have changed.

The Cowboys took an extended look at the 5-foot-9, 191-pound Wheaton and found out he was nursing a sore foot during the combine.

He improved his 40-yard time in front of Cowboys' scout Tom Ciskowski in Eugene later in the spring, and Dallas coaches liked his athletic ability and character.

So the Cowboys, who list no healthy cornerback after their starting two, got what Ciskowski called "a steal," making him the 33rd selection of the third round.

Two days after the first mini-camp of the season, how do the Cowboys feel about their fourth-overall pick in the 1997 draft?

"His athletic ability jumps out at you," Dallas defensive back coach Mike Zimmer said. "He's got what you look for in a cornerback. He's a guy who can get in there and mix it up."

Wheaton felt equally satisfied with last week's workouts.

"It went very well. I felt that the coaches were very impressed," Wheaton said Monday from his home in Phoenix, Ariz.

The Cowboys were originally scheduled to practice Friday, Saturday and Sunday of last week, but rain cut practices short.

However, Zimmer, who coached at Washington State from 1989-93, said he saw enough to know Wheaton is the same player Ciskowski raved about, and the same player he saw on films.

"He did the same things here against NFL receivers that he showed us on film," Zimmer said. "You could see his speed and instincts."

Ciskowski, who was Wheaton's primary scout, was also impressed with the former Duck.

"He just makes plays. He loves the game and has a spark," he said.

The combination of Wheaton's ability and the Cowboys' need at cornerback mean

OPINION



Ryan Frank

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scoreboard

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

NBA PLAYOFFS

Miami.....	75	Atlanta.....	91
Orlando.....	88	Detroit.....	99
Houston.....	125	Seattle.....	late
Minnesota.....	120	Phoenix.....	game

NHL PLAYOFFS

Ottawa.....	2	Phoenix.....	late
Buffalo.....	3	Anaheim.....	game
Edmonton.....	4		
Dallas.....	3		

UO women earn berth in NCAA tourney

■ TENNIS: The Ducks will take on San Diego State, the No. 4 seed in the West regional

By Alex Pond
Sports Reporter

The Oregon women's tennis team received an extension on its season Tuesday when it was invited to compete in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in program history.

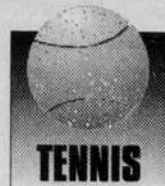
The Ducks (7-10) will face San Diego State (17-12) on May 9 in a first-round West Regional match. The tournament will run May 9-11 at San Diego.

"The opportunity is tremendous," head coach Jack Griffin said. "The players are all just very, very excited. It was a goal of ours to get to the NCAA's."

The Aztecs, the West region's No. 4 seed,

are currently ranked No. 35 in the nation and are fresh off a championship in the Western Athletic Conference tournament.

However, Griffin said the Aztecs may be a bit underrated.



"They were 35 in the last rankings and they just won the WAC," Griffin said. "They've beaten BYU a lot of years in a row and they beat UNLV, who was ranked 17th in the country, so they're better than 35."

"I've seen them play off and on. They came here in the fall and I've seen them play a little bit throughout this year and if we play well we can play with them."

The Aztecs' top players are No. 42 Maggie Cole and No. 92 Jeanette Bhagandas. In addition, the doubles team of Cole and Lisa Papi is No. 39.

Eight teams are selected for each regional, and Griffin said the Ducks were the last team invited.

He said he knew his team would be on the bubble but thought it may have had a chance because of its strong schedule and the fact that its been nationally ranked much of the year.

"I think it helps that we've been somewhat steady at staying in the rankings when the other teams have kind of popped in and out," Griffin said. "We've been dropping a little bit, although after this a few teams that we've beaten have moved into the rankings again."