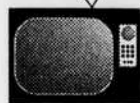


BEST BETS



NCAA Football
SMU at TCU,
ESPN (34), 5 p.m.

SPORTS

Oregon Daily
Emerald

Respect is a foreign word in the Pac-10

One of my favorite topics to gripe about — or whine about, depending on whom you talk to — is respect, or lack thereof.

University of Oregon sports get none, at least not nationally, which isn't entirely unwarranted. While the football and men's basketball programs have improved in recent years, becoming quite formidable against top teams in the Pacific-10 Conference, both have a long way to go before their game highlights regularly appear in SportsCenter's first half hour of programming.

OPINION



Chris Hansen

The Oregon women's basketball team, on the other hand, continues to be the Rodney Dangerfield of the Pac-10. All this team does is win games and make it to the NCAA Tournament. Oregon made it to its fourth consecutive tournament

last season and dominated the league competition — except for Stanford — and the Ducks are still ranked fourth in the preseason Pac-10 coaches poll behind the Cardinal, Arizona and UCLA.

True, the Ducks haven't been too successful in the tournament, 2-4. But last season Oregon did beat San Diego State in the first round before losing to eventual national champion Tennessee.

Maybe Jody Runge's team needs to beat Stanford to gain some respect, something they almost did last season, losing by three points in their McArthur Court matchup. That might be an unfair way to judge a team, considering that Stanford has only lost 10 regular-season games in the last four seasons, but it would definitely give Oregon the respect it deserves.

On a broader front, the Pac-10 as a conference, in all sports, gets very little respect from pollsters around the country.

The one exception is UCLA, the only school on the West Coast that eastern pollsters can think of when it comes time to cast a vote.

For instance, in this week's Associated Press Top 25 football poll, UCLA is ranked No. 7 in the country. Behind the Bruins is Washington State at No. 11. Normally, a top-15 ranking for the Cougars would be considered a godsend. But this week, they should be insulted. The Bruins are a very good football team, but logically, the Cougars are better. Just look at two simple facts: the Cougars are 9-1 while the Bruins are 8-2, and Washington State has beaten UCLA this season. Seems simple to me.

It is a little outrageous that Washington State isn't even in the top 10.

I'm not so much sticking up for the Cougars as I am sticking up for the conference.

Look at UCLA in the ESPN's Sportzone men's basketball preseason poll and in the Sports Illustrated preseason rankings. The ESPN poll has the Bruins ranked No. 5 while SI has them ranked No. 8.

Both are ridiculously high for a team that lost starters Cameron Dollar and Charles O'Bannon and reserve Bob Myers to graduation. Also, starting center Jelani McCoy and sixth man Kris Johnson were kicked off the team for being unable to lay off the post-practice bong rips.

That leaves Toby Bailey, J.R. Henderson and Brandon Loyd as the only remaining players who had significant playing time last season on a Bruins team that only played seven or eight deep. Add to that a group of highly touted freshmen and you have to question the validity of the high rankings.

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CROSS COUNTRY NOTES



CHAD PATTESON/Emerald

"I think having raced there already will be huge for us."

Milena Glusac
Senior runner

Milena Glusac and Liz Howell are two Oregon runners who will look to stay at the front of the race and keep the Ducks in the hunt for a possible national title Monday at the NCAA Championships

Men, women bring confidence to NCAAs

The women will have an advantage at the NCAA Championships, having run at the Furman Invitational earlier, head coach Tom Heinonen says.

By Joel Hood
Sports Reporter

Five days after they had claimed two of the West Region's four NCAA Championship qualifying spots, both the Oregon men's and women's cross country teams have had time to put this accomplishment into perspective.

The women's team will make its 21st NCAA Championship appearance under head coach Tom Heinonen in Greenville, S.C., this Monday. Precisely the scenario Heinonen was hoping for when he accepted an invite to attend the Furman Invitational earlier this season — a prestigious, national event that is reserved for the country's top women's programs.

"It's going to help us already having raced against these top teams," Heinonen said. "That's one of the biggest reasons why I wanted to race at Furman earlier this year. I think we are going to be a lot more confident having already made the trip and competed well."

Confident in part because the NCAAs will be run on the exact same course as the Oct. 11 Furman meet. An advantage, Oregon's runners said, for the teams that have already run on the Furman University Golf Course.

"I think having raced there already will be huge for us," senior Milena Glusac said. "We already know the makeup of the course and the lay of the land, but we still have to be at our best to bring home some hardware."

Trophies will be given to the top four schools in the 22-team field. Oregon finished fourth in the 30-team Furman Invitational, which included 13 of the top 25 teams. A repeat of that performance Monday and the Ducks should bring home some hardware.

Heinonen credits the Ducks' late-season results — a pair of second-place finishes against nationally ranked competition — to their depth. More specifically, the emergence of redshirt freshman Annie Ebner after an Achilles injury in September.

"Annie has really been running well," Heinonen said, "at a time when we need her to the most."

Ebner, a former track star and 1,600-meter champion in California, earned her first top-five finish for the Ducks at the West Regional Championships in Tucson, Ariz., last Saturday, a performance she thinks she can improve on at the NCAAs.

"I just want to go out and run my race," Ebner said. "If I can keep my teammates in my sight, I think I can run a good race. I'm thankful for just being healthy and able to run. It was really hard to have to sit back and watch my teammates run. It was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do."

On the men's side, the NCAAs will be the first journey to the East Coast for the team this season, but the runners don't see confidence as a problem.

"I think our team is running the best we have all season," junior Micah Davis said. "We are really feeding off each other right now and competing at a high level. We are hoping to stay healthy this week and put it all together on Monday."

Oregon finished second Saturday at the West Regional Championships, but accomplished the goals it had set going in.

"I was really pleased with the way the team performed," junior Rob Aubrey said. "It's the first time we've had all five of our runners running well in the same race. We ran smart, and we learned from our earlier mistakes."

Despite a No. 6 ranking this season, Oregon's runners aren't sure the team has gotten the respect it de-

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On tap

■ **WHO:**
No. 6 Oregon men's and women's teams

■ **WHAT:**
NCAA Championships

■ **WHERE:**
Greenville, S.C.

■ **WHEN:**
Monday, Nov. 24, Saturday, October 4th.

