



Oregon front-runner for Las Vegas Bowl

Conflicts with final exams and a conference contract could take Iowa out of the running for the Las Vegas Bowl

By Ryan Frank
Sports Editor

It appears the Las Vegas Bowl selection committee is ready to offer the Oregon Ducks the at-large bid in its Dec. 20 bowl, sources close to the bowl indicated late Monday.

Oregon will be on its way to Las Vegas should it accept the selection committee's offer, which is expected to come Tuesday afternoon.

The selection committee was leaning toward Iowa for its at-large bid, but because of final exams that go until Dec. 19 and the Big Ten's contracted commitment to the Sun Bowl, the Hawkeyes would have to change final exams and work its way out of the conference contract by today to get to

the Las Vegas Bowl — a bowl which the Hawkeyes never wanted to go to in the first place.

That leaves Oregon, the selection committee's second choice, as the team to fill the at-large bid that would pit the Ducks against No. 23 Air Force. The bowl requires the Ducks to pay \$255,500 for tickets, while it is reported that

the bowl will cover the hotel costs in addition to the \$800,000 payout to Oregon.

Oregon athletic director Bill Moos said Monday afternoon he had not spoken directly to officials from either the Las Vegas Bowl or the Dec. 29 Sports Humanitarian

Bowl in Boise, Idaho, the other postseason possibility for the Ducks. Through second-hand information, he was under the impression a decision would be made Tuesday afternoon.

"We're still sitting in the same position as yesterday," Moos said.

Moos made his pitch to the Las Vegas Bowl selection committee Sunday, saying the committee appeared "extremely interested."

The selection committee did not make its decision Monday because it wanted to attempt to work Iowa into its bowl, but Branan Allison of the Las Vegas Bowl told the Las Vegas Review-Journal on Monday

Turn to BOWL, Page 12



Bowl bound

■ **WHAT:**
Las Vegas Bowl

■ **WHEN:**
Dec. 20,
3:30 p.m.

■ **OPPONENT:**
No. 23 Air Force

■ **TV:** ESPN2

Academic problems not Kent's fault

■ "Most academic programs are imposed by the director of athletics or the NCAA. [Ernie Kent's] student-athletes are developing academic self-confidence with this program. Their attitude about school is excellent," Rosalyn Dunlap-Alli, St. Mary's assistant director of athletics in charge of academics said in the March 1993 NABC Courtside.

■ "Oregon basketball player Andre Larry was kicked off the team for academic reasons, the athletic department said." — Emerald, June 24, 1997.

■ "Guard Tyron Manlove has requested time away from his athletic responsibilities to focus on academics." — Emerald, Nov. 18, 1997.

■ "All aspects of basketball are very important to this program. That is on the floor and off the floor. There are some things that are very important to his success and very important to this program's success that have to become a priority," said Oregon head coach Ernie Kent on Nov. 12, 1997, referring to Jonathon Nelson's lack of playing time in the preseason due to academic reasons.

Ernie Kent came to the Oregon basketball program last spring with the goal of molding well-rounded student-athletes who experience success both on and off the court.

OPINION



Rob Moseley

To do this, Kent implemented his "self-improvement program," which was met with great success at Colorado State, where Kent developed the program while serving as an assistant coach from 1987-89. After taking the head coaching job at St. Mary's in 1991, Kent again put his players through the eight-week program, again to documented success, as evidenced by the March 1993 article in the National Association of Basketball Coaches of the United States periodical, NABC Courtside.

Topics addressed at St. Mary's included the obvious — study skills, time management, testing anxiety, date rape and AIDS awareness — as well as the sublime, like eating etiquette and how to dress for success.

Now that Kent is at the helm of the Oregon team, it appears his program is facing a true test. Since taking over in April, no less than three Oregon players have experienced academic difficulties.

Turn to MOSELEY, Page 12

OREGON VS. SAN DIEGO STATE



CHAD PATTESON/Emerald

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent and the Ducks look to stop their losing skid tonight against San Diego State. Oregon has lost two straight games, including a nine-point loss to Santa Clara at home last Saturday.

On tap

■ **WHAT:**
Oregon at San Diego State

■ **WHERE:**
San Diego

■ **WHEN:**
Today, 7:05 p.m.

■ **TV:**
KVAL (8)

■ **RADIO:**
590 AM

Ducks look to stop two-game losing streak

Ernie Kent hopes his team can 'clean up' the mental mistakes it made in losses to Portland State and Santa Clara

By Rob Moseley
Sports Reporter

And you thought you were busy during Dead Week.

The Oregon men's basketball team travels to San Diego State on Tuesday to face the Aztecs at 7:05 p.m. while most students will be brushing up on their Spanish vocabulary or relearning mathematical equations from the term's first few weeks.

"Academics are so important right now," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "It's so hard to get in and out of Eugene. We're going to have to get [the players] up at 4:30 in the morning to get them back in time for afternoon classes on Wednesday. Those are tough schedules, but the other teams are going through the same things, and we're going to have to do it, too."

The Ducks (1-2) are fresh off a 67-58 loss to Santa Clara on Saturday, and after an upset loss to Portland State on Nov. 25, the team's confidence would seem to be in question, although that is a notion Kent refutes.

"There is no problem with morale," he said. "No one likes to lose, but I think the thing for us, a team that's learning as we go, is to just look at the things that get better with each game. We got better with the Santa Clara game over the Portland State game, and now here's an opportunity to get better again."

Although Kent has said in the past that taking the team on the road eliminates distractions and improves its focus, he isn't as confident this week.

"It's tough playing on the road," he said. "But this gives us a chance to lock in on the mental mistakes we made in the last game and get them cleaned up."

Those mental mistakes contributed to Oregon's 36.5 shooting percentage against

the Broncos, as well as a rebounding margin of minus eight. The Ducks also registered just 10 assists to go along with the 58 points, a far cry from the 80 points and 30 assists per game that are the Ducks' goals for each game, Oregon senior Henry Madden said in the preseason.

The loss to Santa Clara did feature the emergence of an inside presence for the Ducks, a trend that Kent would like to see continue.

"There's going to be nights when the game's not there on the perimeter," Kent said on Saturday. "We told our big guys, 'You've got to step up and play,' and it was nice to see them do that. We're going to need that, particularly against San Diego State. They're the exact same kind of team [as Santa Clara] on the perimeter and maybe not as strong and physical inside."

Center Mike Carson led the Ducks on Saturday with 15 points and seven rebounds, and forward Jonathon Nelson contributed a career-high 10 points, including four of four from the free-throw line.