

Ducks hope to keep home streak alive against USC

Lisa Bowyer is listed as doubtful for tonight's game against the Trojans after spraining her ankle in practice

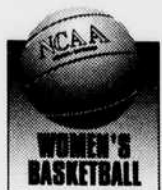
By Alex Pond
Sports Reporter

If recent history means anything, the Ducks could be in business when they take on Southern California tonight in their first Pacific-10 Conference home game of the season.

The Oregon women's basketball team is 3-1 in its Pac-10 home openers under head coach Jody Runge, the only loss coming at the hands of Stanford in 1996.

"Obviously, I think winning at home in the Pac-10 season this year is gonna be the biggest difference in who has successful

years and who doesn't," Runge said. "I think the home-court advantage is gonna be very important this year in the Pac-10, and hopefully we can take full advantage of it."



Oregon, 5-5 overall and 1-1 in the Pac-10 following a 97-72 loss at No. 14 Stanford on Sunday and already reeling from the loss of center Jenny Mowe to a knee injury, could find itself short-handed once again against the Trojans (6-5, 1-1).

The Ducks received more bad news from an injury standpoint this week when starting guard Lisa Bowyer went down with a sprained left ankle during Tuesday's practice. She is listed as doubtful for tonight's contest.

If Bowyer can't go, Runge said she was uncertain as to who would take her place in the starting lineup, although one possibility could include moving Nicole Strange from her customary small forward spot to shooting guard. The small forward position would then be filled by either

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On tap

- **WHO:** Oregon vs. USC
- **WHAT:** Game 3 of the Pac-10 season
- **WHERE:** McArthur Court
- **WHEN:** Tonight, 7 p.m.



Jeremy Ensrud, who ranks first in the Pac-10 and fourth in the nation at 134 pounds, has lead the Oregon wrestling team to an undefeated record this season.

"He is an attacker. That's something that will never change. He is a very intense wrestler...."

Ron Finley
 UO head coach

Wrestler's Instinct

Aggressiveness, confidence and perseverance have catapulted Jeremy Ensrud atop the Pac-10

By Joel Hood
Sports Reporter

In an instance of total chaos, there is a line that men cross when they surrender to the most basic of animal instincts. It is at this point, the great author Joseph Conrad once said, that men become true and the boundaries between right and wrong are blurred.

Conrad would have loved Oregon wrestler Jeremy Ensrud. The 5-foot-4, 134-pound senior uses that breaking point like a starter's pistol.

"He competes in dual meets with as much intensity as he practices with," head coach Ron Finley says.

And by all accounts, Tuesday night's

practice at the Casanova Center was more animal than man.

Torn, sleeveless T-shirts hung crookedly over bandaged knees. War-ravaged bodies flung over the thick, padded carpet like match sticks, ankle tape, bloody tissues and pink muscles that showed the effects of the tireless, five-month season.

In his 10 years in the sport, Ensrud has been through a thousand practices like this one. He knows that it takes intense concentration and hard work to become a champion. And by anyone's definition, Ensrud is a champion.

"He is one of the hardest workers we've ever had at Oregon," Finley says.

"He works year round to improve his technique and athleticism, and it is certainly paying off for him. Ensrud has made improvements in nearly every match this season."

Ensrud, a native of Hillsboro, was an All-American last season for the first time in his career and, barring injury, is expected to be only the fourth Oregon wrestler ever to repeat that honor. He has compiled an impressive 19-1 record this season, stands a perfect 3-0 in Pacific-10 Conference competition, and on March 1 will try to defend his No. 1 conference ranking and the Pac-10 title he earned a season ago.

But that's the end of the story. The be-

ginning lays in that 90-degree, padded room at the Casanova Center. And the beginning repeats itself, four practices a week, 25 weeks a season.

"Confidence is the key," Ensrud says. "If you don't think you can win, you won't. And I think that mostly comes from practice. If you don't prepare yourself in practice, you won't be able to keep yourself up for the matches."

Tuesday's battle intensified. Ensrud was matched up with an Oregon wrestler of similar height and weight who was doing all he could just to remain upright. This dance lasted maybe a few seconds.

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Pac-10 deserves more respect for showings in bowls, basketball

Lost in the inevitable debate surrounding college football's second shared national championship in the past four seasons was an interesting tidbit found near the bottom of the final USA Today/ESPN coaches poll.

The 25th slot was occupied by Air Force. Fantastic, I thought. This means, of course, that the Ducks, who demolished the Falcons in the Las Vegas Bowl, would have to be ranked. No coach could have the audacity to rank Air Force above an Oregon team that it was obviously inferior to, would he?

Apparently this was faulty logic,

as Oregon could only be found in the "others receiving votes" category as the mythical 30th ranked team.

Yes, Oregon did finish the season 7-5 while Air Force was 10-3, but the opportunities for comparison are plentiful. Besides the dismantling in Vegas, another Falcon loss was to Fresno State, which the Ducks beat, albeit in overtime.

It's also necessary to consider each team's record in relation to the strength of its conference. The Air Force plays in the Western Athletic Conference, in which only one other ranked team resides. Four Pac-10 teams can be found in the final rank-

ings, including two of the top 10, UCLA and Washington State, which narrowly missed beating one of the eventual national champions, Michigan, in the Rose Bowl. That was the only blemish in an otherwise perfect bowl season for the Pac-10, as each of the other five participants notched victories, most in convincing fashion.

Missouri was the lone 7-5 team to make the final rankings, largely on the strength of its overtime loss to No. 1 Nebraska and the infamous kicked ball. Oregon beat No. 18 Washington and almost upset both No. 5 UCLA and the No. 9 Cougars.

I'm not sure the Ducks are indeed one of the nation's top 25 teams, but if Air Force and Missouri are, then a strong argument can be made.

And the lack of respect paid to the Pac-10 in basketball is even more atrocious.

As noted in this publication's stellar Pacific-10 Conference basketball preview today, The Sporting News ranks the Pac-10 as the seventh-strongest conference in the country, behind such nonentities as the WAC and the Atlantic-10. This logic eludes me.

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Rob Moseley