

PAC-8 HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Tournament end of UO's season

Even if the Ducks win the Pacific-8 title, they will not advance to the national championship

By Tim Pyle
Freelance Sports Reporter

Two days ago the Oregon Club Sports hockey team was planning on using the Pacific-8 Hockey Tournament at Lane County Ice Arena this weekend as means to advance to the American College Hockey Association National Tournament.

Now, Oregon does not have that opportunity because it found out participants in nationals have already been determined.

What it does have is the opportunity to prove ACHA Western Region voters wrong for leaving the Ducks home no matter how they do this weekend. A win against Southern California — one of the four West teams selected to go to nationals — in their first-round game would go a long way toward making that statement.

So would Oregon's first-ever Pac-8 Tournament Championship, which the Ducks could claim with two consecutive victories.

"It just makes us all want to prove ourselves more," said Stuart Robertson, who is the student coordinator and a goalkeeper for the Ducks. "We know that we're a great team, and the national tournament is going to come because our program is building so fast."

Stanford and UCLA are the two other Pac-8 teams challenging

Oregon and the Trojans for the tournament championship. The top three teams qualify according to a mathematical formula that takes into account winning percentage and opponents in conference games. The tournament's host also qualifies automatically.

Washington State, Washington, California and Arizona State are the other four teams in the conference. However, Arizona State is not eligible for tournament play because they are a Division I ACHA team, while the rest of the league is composed of Division II teams. Robert Wasson, tournament director and Pac-8 assistant director, said the Sun Devils may move into Division II next season and become an active member of the league.

The Pac-8 was formed in 1995, and its season runs from September to February. Stanford is the only team to have won the league tournament up to this point, beating California 4-2 in the 1996 final and Oregon 3-1 last season.

Stanford and UCLA play the tournament's first game at 4 p.m. Saturday. Oregon and USC start play following that game at 7:15 p.m. The consolation and championship games will take place Sunday. The losers of the first-round games play at 10 a.m., while the winners play for the tournament championship at 1:15 p.m.

The Ducks (9-7 Pac-8, including two forfeits) are the No. 4 seed.

All-time leading scorer Ezra Louthis, a senior right wing, leads the Ducks in his final collegiate competition. Freshman left wing

Pete Harris is tops on the team in scoring this season with 31 points (19 goals, 12 assists).

Playing at home should be to Oregon's advantage because it is 7-1 here on the season. Head coach Geoff Norman said the Ducks must be ready to play from the opening face-off against USC because Oregon is 8-1 when it scores first and 2-5-1 when it doesn't.

The Trojans (14-3 Pac-8) enter this weekend's play as the No. 1 seed and are already assured of a berth in nationals. They are 2-0 against the Ducks this season with both wins coming at their home arena in Anaheim, Calif.

Norman and Robertson both said USC is an explosive team that charges the net relentlessly. The fact that six Trojans have more than 20 points on the season is a testament to that. Defenseman Steve Crudale leads the Trojans with 35 points (16 goals, 19 assists).

The Cardinal (8-3 Pac-8) is the No. 2 seed. Norman and Robertson both point to Stanford's goaltending and discipline as its strengths. Senior forward Evan Asano is the defending tournament most valuable player, and goaltender Nick Flores protects the net for the Cardinal.

The Bruins (6-5 Pac-8) are the No. 3 seed. Norman said team play is their best quality, and they boast three players with 25 points — wing Dumas Manguile, center Reinhart Kramreither and center Ben Theule. UCLA has yet to play Stanford this season.

Championship Form Chart

1 

USC Trojans

■ RECORD: 14-3 Pac-8

■ KEY PLAYERS: D Steve Crudale (35 points), F Ken Clarke (33 pts.)

■ NOTES: Have won 11 of last 12 Pac-8 games ... 2-0 vs. Ducks this season ... six players with more than 20 points

3 

UCLA BRUINS

■ RECORD: 6-5 Pac-8

■ KEY PLAYERS: C Reinhart Kramreither (25 pts.), W Dumas Manguile (25 pts.), W Ben Theule (25 pts.)

■ NOTES: Have lost 5 of last 8 Pac-8 games ... have not played the Cardinal this season

2 

Stanford Cardinal

■ RECORD: 8-3 Pac-8

■ KEY PLAYERS: F Evan Asano (1997 tournament MVP, 17 pts.), G Nick Flores, F Brad Helms (28 pts.), F Eri Crum (28 pts.)

■ NOTES: Two-time defending tournament champion ... 3 shutouts in 11 Pac-8 games

4 

Oregon Ducks

■ RECORD: 9-7 Pac-8

■ KEY PLAYERS: RW Ezra Louthis (28 pts.), LW Peter Harris (31 pts.), C Erik Williams (28 pts.)

■ NOTES: Have won 7 of 8 home games this season ... 8-1 when scoring first ... have not played USC or Stanford at home this season

Weekend Schedule

Saturday

■ No. 2 Stanford vs. No. 3 UCLA, 4 p.m.
■ No. 1 USC vs. No. 4 Oregon, 7:15

Sunday

■ Consolation Game, 10 a.m.
■ Championship 1:15 p.m.



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