

NBA
L.A. Lakers at Indiana,
TBS (3), 6 p.m.

SPORTS

Oregon Daily
Emerald

Top Oregon recruit's future still uncertain

The Dennis Nathan saga continues. A Feb. 17 story in The Seattle Times quoted the former Gresham High School basketball star and current Oregon men's basketball recruit as saying he has given up on the idea that he will be academically eligible enough to enroll at Oregon next year. Instead, he will attend a yet-to-be-named community college.

Nathan is currently attending Renton High School in suburban Seattle — his

BASKETBALL



UO Men's Notes

by Chris Hansen

Oregon next season.

And so it goes for one of the most talented players to come out of the state in recent memory.

The 6-foot-5 point guard averaged 22.5 points and 14.3 rebounds during his junior season at Gresham in 1996 after orally committing to Oregon and former Oregon head coach Jerry Green. But Nathan dropped out of Gresham when the season ended. He enrolled in a prep school in Connecticut where he lasted less than two months before transferring to Renton last fall, where he has focused on academics and not played basketball. He signed his second letter of intent to play for Oregon this past fall before the Ducks' current season got underway.

"We're going to give him until the middle or end of March before we make a decision on Dennis Nathan," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said, not yet convinced that his team will be without Nathan's services next season. "We need to see where he is academically. He could have made that decision, and we don't know it yet."

Either way, Kent has not, and will not, give up on the 18-year-old basketball prodigy with a troubled past but what could become an endlessly bright future.

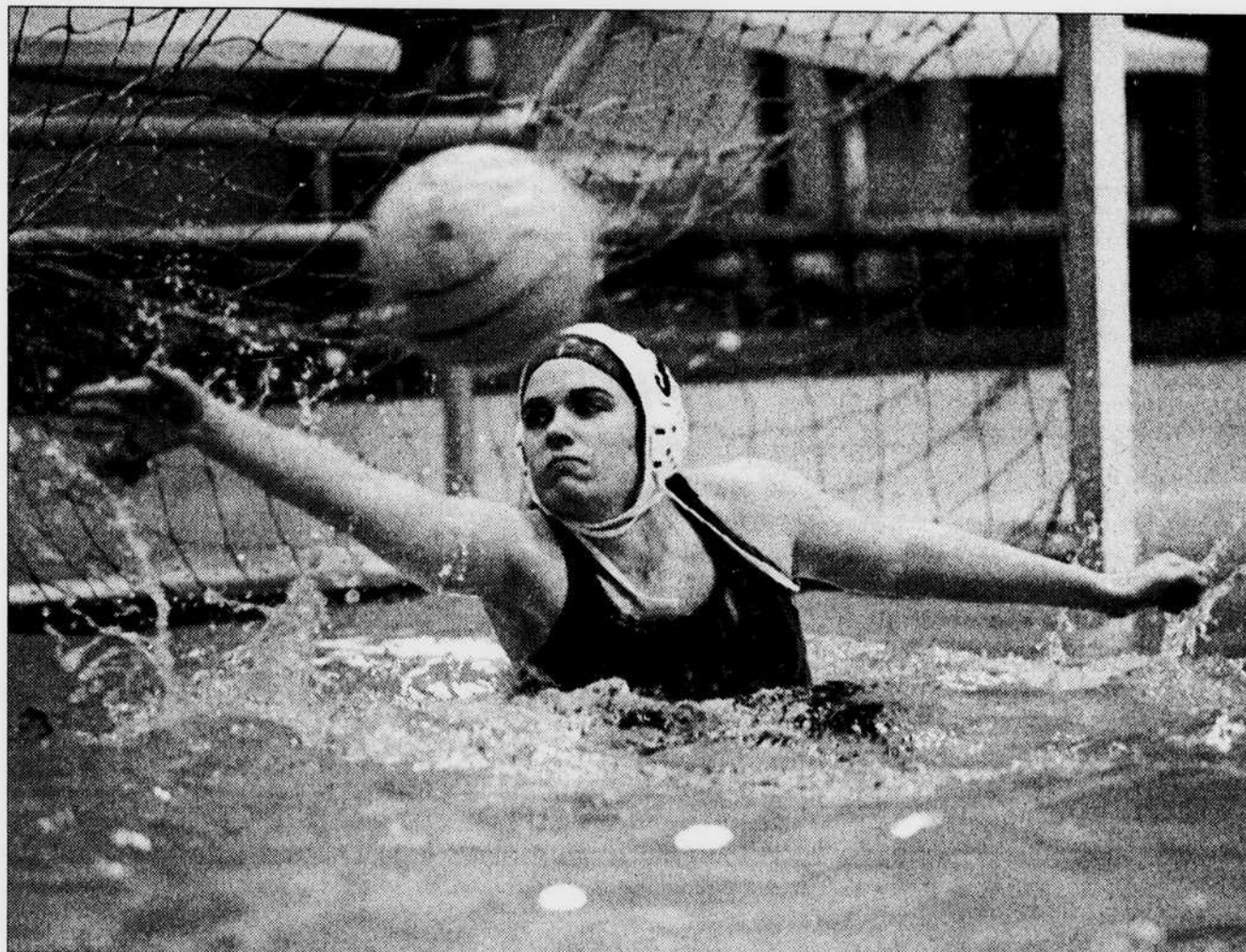
"It hasn't been frustrating because you're dealing with a human being and giving him an opportunity to have greater success," Kent said. "Now, to get here, he has some further things to gain in his life

Turn to **RECRUIT**, Page 9

"I can live with not running or walking fast. I would never let [the disease] take me away from water polo."

Rachel Astrella

UO water polo goaltender



NICK MEDLEY/Emerald

Rachel Astrella, a water polo goaltender who suffers from a disease which makes it painful for her to walk and run, lunges toward the ball to block a shot.

Overcoming an obstacle

Rachel Astrella is the last line of defense for the Oregon Club Sports water polo team despite a medical condition that makes it difficult for her to walk

By Shireen Haynes
Freelance Sports Reporter

Rachel Astrella walks with a noticeable limp, has constant pain in her hip, can no longer run and cannot even walk fast, but she does not let that get the best of her. She does not like to dwell on what she cannot do, but rather on what she still can do: swim.

"I can live with not running or walking fast," Astrella says. "I would never let it take me away from water polo."

Astrella, a junior, is a goaltender for the women's Club Sports water polo team at the University. She has been swimming competitively since her freshman year of high school. She was introduced to water polo later that year and has been involved with the sport ever since.

"I don't know why I got involved," Astrella says. "I love polo; I love the brutality of it."

ty of it."

Now in her second year as a goaltender, Astrella plays a position that is considered one of the most physically challenging, according to teammate Lindsey McMurren.

"Ironically, that is one of the hardest positions to play because you have to get into a high position," McMurren says. "You're using your legs rather than your arms."

Turn to **POLO**, Page 12

Two more wins and an NCAA Tournament bid should be Oregon's

Tournament, tournament, tournament. That's what every Oregon women's basketball fan wants to know about, so that's what we're going to talk about.

The Ducks have three home games left to play this season: Oregon State, California and Stanford.

Should they win two of the three, which on paper they should, then they should be in their fifth straight NCAA Tournament. The word "should" was used three times in that previous sentence, and for good reason.

All of this is pure speculation.

But winning two of their final three would put the Oregon women at 17-9 overall and 13-5 in Pacific-10 Conference play, and looking at the Ratings Percentage Index, which is derived by the

NCAA to rank all 300 Division I-A teams, Oregon has a pretty decent shot.

In the most recent RPI rankings, the Ducks are 36th, one spot behind UCLA and 12 ahead of Washington. Stanford is the highest-ranked Pacific-10 Conference team at No. 6, and Arizona is the next highest at No. 9.

The RPI is a computer-generated rating derived from the team's Division-I winning percentage (25 percent), strength of schedule (50 percent) and opponents' strength of schedule (25 percent).

The 64-team NCAA Tournament, which starts on March 13, is made up of 30 teams that receive automatic bids by winning their respective conference championship and 34 teams that are chosen based largely on the RPI.

Oregon is essentially out of the running for the Pac-10's automatic bid, being 2 1/2 games out of first, but when coupled with wins in two of their final three games, the Ducks' RPI rating should be enough for the NCAA selection committee.

Sean Pate of the Pacific-10 Conference said with two more wins it would be "a very strong possibility," for the Ducks to get back to the tournament.

The bigger the crowd, the better

With a raucous crowd yelling at the top of its collective lungs in the Hec Edmundson Pavilion in Seattle on Jan. 15, the Oregon women had no trouble ignoring the noise and squashing the then-No. 13 Huskies 76-59.

Turn to **WOMEN**, Page 12

BASKETBALL



UO Women's Notes

by Ryan Frank