

BEST BETS



NHL Hockey
Phoenix at Detroit,
ESPN (34) 4:30 p.m.

SPORTS

Oregon Daily
Emerald

Vikings drop Ducks with Game 2 comeback in Portland

After a victory in Game 1, Oregon blew a three-run lead in the second game to split at Portland State

By Joel Hood
Sports Reporter

If ever the Oregon softball team was set up for a letdown, Wednesday's twilight doubleheader at Portland State was it.

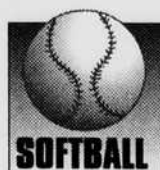
Just two days removed from their emotional upset victories against No. 12 Stanford and then-No. 17 California, and just three days prior to their Civil War clash with No. 21 Oregon State, the Ducks faced a Viking team still smarting from a pair of embarrassing losses to Oregon earlier in the year.

The result was a less-than-impressive 10-6 Duck victory in Game 1, and a furious fourth-inning Viking comeback in Game 2 to beat No. 17 Oregon for the first time in three seasons.

"We just came out flat," head coach Rick Gamez said. "We didn't play well in any aspect of the game."

In Portland State's 9-6 come-from-be-

hind win, the Vikings pounded out 12 hits and scored nine runs in a frenzied fourth- and fifth-inning rally. But perhaps the biggest blow of the night was to the Ducks' postseason hopes.



With just five weeks remaining in the regular season, Oregon (32-15 overall, 4-4 Pacific-10 Conference) probably needs to finish in the top four of the NCAA's Pacific Regional rankings to qualify for postseason play for the first time since 1994.

"I think that we're still in good position," Gamez said. "This performance could end up having a positive effect on how we finish the season. Now we know that we can't look past anyone, and that we need to come out every game focused and aggressive."

If Oregon is going to make a push toward the playoffs, Gamez said, it likely will need to solidify its No. 2 pitcher's role — something the Ducks were along way from accomplishing on Wednesday.

Christine Birnbaum (4-1) allowed 12 hits and six runs in seven innings of work in Game 1. And Bethany Smith (10-5) was knocked around for six hits and five runs in the Game-2 loss, her fourth in a row.

"I was disappointed in our whole performance," Gamez said. "We didn't pitch as well as I would have liked, but our defense also didn't do much to bail them out."

However, the Duck offense gave it their best shot.

Outfielder Lindsey Welch hit a two-run home run in the top of the fourth inning to cap a six-run Oregon rally in Game 1. She then hit a three-run shot, her fifth of the season, in the fourth inning of Game 2.

Wednesday

■ GAME 1
UO 10 PSU 6

■ GAME 2
PSU 9 UO 6

NOTES

Ducks score eight of their ten Game-1 runs on home runs ... Melisa Jeppsen and Melinda Walton each hit three-run shots, Lindsey Welch added a two-run home run

"They are two peas in a pod. Their personalities complement each other quite well, but they're both intense, ambitious and competitive."

Sally Harmon
UO assistant coach

Pearmine (left) and Howell finished 11th and 15th, respectively, at least season's NCAA championships, but each is poised to better her finish after quality showings in early season meets this year.



NICK MEDLEY/Emerald

Making a POINT

Oregon track and field aces Katie Pearmine and Karis Howell combine to form the best javelin duo in the nation

By Rob Moseley
Sports Reporter

No intercollegiate athletic event rewards individual achievements like track and field. While records are kept for team competitions, those competitions are decided by individuals excelling against a field of adversaries that more often than not includes teammates who need to be beaten as soundly as participants from rival schools.

All of which makes the relationship between Oregon javelin throwers Katie Pearmine and Karis Howell that much more special. Each woman is embroiled in head-to-head competition with the other in every meet they attend, yet the two share a bond that is admittedly unheard of in the track community.

"They are two peas in a pod," Oregon assistant coach Sally Harmon says. "Their personalities complement each other quite well, but they're both intense, ambitious and competitive. They've just decided it would be easier to work together than butt heads."

That dynamic took shape two years ago when Howell entered the University as a freshman from Vancouver, Wash.

Although the 5-foot-6 general science major finished in the top 10 at the state meet in her last three years of high school, including a second-place mark of 146 feet, 3 inches as a senior, Howell needed guidance on several different levels. Harmon says she was looking to Pearmine to fill a "big sister"-type role with Howell, who welcomed that presence.

"I came in and Katie was a junior and our top thrower," Howell says. "I needed someone to help me with how to train, what I was supposed to do, and she was a great person to do that."

For her part, Pearmine, a 5-foot-7 senior from Gervais, was just looking to keep her athletics in perspective.

"I wouldn't want to be out here unless I was having fun," Pearmine says. "We try and keep it fun because it is such a big time commitment. I think it's rare to find people in your event

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Alyssa Fredrick to transfer to Oregon

Under NCAA transfer regulations, the 6-3 freshman from San Diego State will sit out the next season

By Alex Pond
Sports Editor

Oregon women's basketball head coach Jody Runge confirmed Wednesday that San Diego State freshman Alyssa Fredrick, who averaged 11.3 points and 6.5 rebounds last season, has decided to transfer to Oregon.

Runge would not comment further on Fredrick, other than to say, "We do have her scholarship papers."

Wednesday was also the first day of the national let-

ter-of-intent signing period. However, Runge said the Ducks did not add any recruits to the class of three that signed during November's early signing period.

According to Wednesday's report in The Register-Guard, Fredrick plans to enroll at Oregon next fall, sit out next season as required by NCAA transfer regulations, and join the team with three years of eligibility in the 1999-2000 season.

Fredrick, who could not be reached for comment

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Benjamin announces entry into NBA draft

Benjamin will forgo his final two seasons at Oregon State

By Rob Moseley
Sports Reporter

Oregon State sophomore shooting guard Corey Benjamin announced Wednesday that he will forgo his final two years of

collegiate eligibility and enter the upcoming NBA draft, scheduled for June 24 in Vancouver, B.C.

Benjamin finished second to Arizona State's Jeremy Veal in the Pacific-10 Conference scoring race this past season with 19.8 points per game and was

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