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PAC-10 BASKETBALL PREVIEW

Men

Continued from Page 6B

shutting down just Smith inside.



5. Washington Huskies (7-4, 0-1)

Head Coach: Bob Bender

Player to Watch: Todd MacCulloch, C

Outlook: After a surprising Sweet Sixteen appearance last March, Washington faces high expectations this season. Those hopes are justifiable, considering the return of the Huskies' top three scorers in center Todd MacCulloch and guards Donald Watts and Deon Luton.

But Washington will not be able to sneak up on anybody this time, and so far the Huskies have struggled. Lowly Washington State upset Washington in the Huskies' Pac-10 opener, but Watts was out with an injury.



6. California Golden Bears (10-2, 1-1)

Head Coach: Ben Braun

Player to Watch:

Geno Carlisle, G

Outlook: If California can put

everything together, it could finish in the top three spots in the Pac-10.

Guards Geno Carlisle, Thomas Kilgore and Raymond King and big men Sean Lampley, Michael Gill and Francisco Elson provide the Bears with an abundance of capable players. Head coach Ben Braun needs to find a way to mesh them all together into a deadly team.



7. Arizona State Sun Devils (8-6, 0-2)

Head Coach: Rob Evans

Player to Watch: Bobby Lazor, forward

Outlook: Arizona State is not lacking in talent with forwards Bobby Lazor and Mike Batiste and high-scoring guard Eddie House, but neither is any other team in the Pac-10.



8. USC Trojans (9-2, 1-1)

Head Coach: Henry Bibby

Player to Watch: Adam Spanich, F

Outlook: The top eight teams in the Pac-10 will all

be formidable this season, and Southern California is among those eight. The problem is they are the eighth, barring drastic improvement.



9. Oregon State Beavers (6-4, 0-2)

Head Coach: Eddie Payne

Player to Watch: Deaundra Tanner, G

Outlook: After the mass exodus that has plagued the Oregon State program in the past few years, head coach Eddie Payne is left with little to fiddle with. Guard Deaundra Tanner is a legitimate scorer, but opposing teams will be able to concentrate on just shutting him down.



10. WSU Cougars (7-5, 1-0)

Head Coach: Kevin Eastman

Player to Watch: Chris Crosby, F

Outlook: Good thing Washington State secured a victory in its first Pac-10 game because the Cougars will not have that winning feeling too often this season.

Luton

Continued from Page 7B

face that he actually likes to walk by himself, he also admitted that things were different.

"On campus it's just me now," he says. "I don't have any other really close friends. But it's cool, I've still got to keep going."

Boudreaux said he thought all the changes have made Luton more mature and better able to adapt to new things, both socially and with basketball.

"He'd be the first to admit he's probably a more patient player, on the court as well as off, waiting his turn," Boudreaux says. "He still needs to become more precise in terms of shot selection and handling the basketball, and I would like to see him improve more defensively, but he's improved overall in his approach."

"He realizes this is an opportunity for him to become a better

person, a better player and a better student."

Luton says Washington is closer now as a team than it ever was. Though he no longer has Sanford and Wooten, Luton says things aren't lonely at practice because the NCAA tournament and last season's success bonded everyone into a cohesive unit.

"Me and Donald are closer. Me and Todd. My relationship has grown with everybody," he says. "We've got a lot of guys that are real cool. Not a lot of egos. We pretty much hang together and work hard together ... we definitely became closer."

All the closeness has translated to the three freshmen: Senque Carey, Grant Leep and Marlon Shelton as well. And it doesn't seem to matter that the UW's greatest strength, its depth, brings with it more competition. Luton alone

could be replaced by forward Greg Clark, or guards Carey, Michael Johnson or Bryan Brown at any point in any given game.

"He doesn't need to be super-concerned about anything other than improving his own game," Boudreaux says. "(But) the thing about depth that's good for coaches is it gives you the opportunity to make guys earn things. I don't care if you are the Big Three or you're not part of the Big Three, you have to earn everything you get."

And though Luton may appear quiet and unresponsive, perhaps even aloof at times to strangers, he is happy with where he and his teammates have found themselves this season. He has even discovered a new best friend to laugh and joke around with in junior walk-on Andrew Moritz.

"I think our team will be great this year," Luton says.

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