

Leigh-Ann Cyboron/Emerald

## Women

### Continued from Page 1

Colorado State were the only other schools featured.

In its trip to Ames last year, Oregon lost 79-76 in dramatic fashion to fifth-seeded Rutgers in the opening round.

Despite the Ducks' No. 15 ranking and the Cyclones' No. 21 ranking, Iowa State received a fourth seed and was chosen to host the first two rounds.

"Obviously it's kind of a disappointment to not play at home," said head coach Jody Runge, who was named the Pac-10's coach of the year for leading the Ducks to their sixth straight NCAA Tournament. "We would have really liked to share this with our fans, but we have to make the most of it."

Oregon received a No. 12 seed last season and a No. 6 seed in 1997. As co-Pac-10 champions with third-seeded UCLA, which is

hosting first and second-round games in the West region, Runge said she thought Oregon would be at least a fourth seed.

"The bottom line is you have to win," Runge said. "I think had we beat Stanford last weekend, it might have made a difference. We've been trying to get respect all year, and now we're going to go to Iowa and get some."

In 1998, Oregon was depleted with injuries and played Rutgers without leading scorer Brienne Meharry or center Jenny Mowe. This season, the Ducks head to the tournament sans injuries and look to reach the third round, something they have not done in their five previous tournament appearances.

And they have a first-team All-Pac-10 point guard to guide them.

Shaquala Williams was just the fourth freshman in conference history named to the All-Pac-10 first

team and was also selected as the conference's freshman of the year. Meharry, Mowe and senior Natasha O'Brien received All-Pac-10 honorable mention votes.

"I'm just excited to be healthy and able to play in the tournament," Meharry said. "Right now it looks pretty good. The first couple of teams we can compete with and maybe get to the Sweet 16. I would love to play someone like Connecticut to get some respect."

First, Oregon must get past Cincinnati.

The Bearcats finished the season atop Conference USA but lost to Tulane in the conference tournament last week. This will be the Bearcats' first NCAA Tournament appearance in 10 years.

"I don't know anything about Cincinnati," Williams said. "But you can't worry about them. We have to just do what we do best

and take care of our business."

If Oregon does take care of business, it will face the winner of the Iowa State-Santa Clara game on Sunday. The winner of the second-round game will most likely face first-seed Connecticut in the third round in Cincinnati.

If Oregon wins one game in the tournament, its 25 overall wins would tie for the most wins by a women's team in school history. Oregon finished with a 9-0 conference record at Mac Court and its 15-3 conference record is the Ducks' best finish in Runge's six years.

It has been a banner year for Oregon. This season the Ducks defeated Stanford for the first time in 22 games, climbed to No. 15 in the rankings and led the conference in points allowed for the entire season.

In early February, Oregon defeated UCLA 106-79, which was the most points scored by any con-

ference team this season.

Oregon swept Washington State, Arizona State, Oregon State, Southern California, California and Washington and improved its record over Northwest schools to 24-0 in the last six years.

While the Ducks were happy to be back in the postseason, the feeling of disappointment was clear.

"There aren't too many teams that draw fans like we do," Williams said. "I wanted to be in the room and say, 'What hurt us?' It would have been nice to play at home because you are not going to beat us unless we roll over and die."

But other Ducks are ready for a change of scenery.

"I'm sure it's going to help us because we've played there," Oregon forward Angelina Wolvert said. "But it's kind of frustrating. If we're going to travel we might as well go somewhere we haven't been."



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