

SPORTS

Tuesday
March 9, 1999Best Bet
Auto Racing
Formula One Grand Prix of Australia
1 p.m., Fox Sports

"I think the team is tournament-ready. Our depth has been our greatest strength."

Jody Runge
Oregon women's head basketball coach

Freshman Shaquana Williams, who was named the Pac-10's freshman of the year and a first-team all-conference member last Friday, meets with her fans at the NCAA Tournament pairings party Sunday at McArthur Court.

Matt Hawkins/Emerald

Oregon must prove itself in postseason to gain national respect

It almost seems like the NCAA is playing a mean trick on the Oregon women's basketball team.

The women will play the first round of the NCAA Tournament in Ames, Iowa, a place they know all too well. The Ducks played Rutgers in a first-round matchup in Ames last season and never made it out of Iowa after a loss to the Scarlet Knights.

This season, after posting a 24-5 overall record and finishing tied with UCLA for the Pacific-10 Conference championship, Oregon had its sights set on playing the first two rounds of the tournament in Eugene.

But No. 12 seed Iowa State (22-7) will be hosting the first two rounds of the Midwest Region. Oregon, the fifth seed in the bracket, has the third-best overall record in their region. Only No. 6 Connecticut (27-4) and Toledo

(25-5) have better records than Oregon.

The Ducks gathered at McArthur Court on Sunday for a pairings party and more than 2,000 fans joined them. The first Pac-10 team to be seeded was UCLA, which received a third seed and was also named as a host team in the West Region for the first two rounds.

Arizona (17-10), which finished fourth in the Pac-10, was next. The Wildcats received a No. 6 seed in the Midwest Region, and that's when Oregon and its fans began to get their hopes up.

Oregon Women's Notes



Allison Ross

"We thought since UCLA was a third seed and Arizona was a sixth seed we'd get the fourth," Oregon forward Brienne Meharry said. "But it's just another chance for us to prove ourselves."

Which is exactly the point.

Oregon needs to prove itself in postseason play. The Ducks have made it to the second round twice in their five appearances under head coach Jody Runge. In 1997 Oregon beat San Diego State in the opening round, but faced then-No. 1 Tennessee in the second round. The Volunteers went on to win the tournament.

Last season, despite injuries, Oregon nearly defeated Rutgers, but, nevertheless, the Ducks' season ended in chilly Ames.

So, Oregon is a fifth-seed this year,

not a bad place to be, but it definitely didn't get the recognition that the other Pac-10 champion did.

Everyone knows Oregon can win at home (9-0 conference record at Mac Court this season), now they need to win on the road in the postseason and prove they are a team worthy of national recognition.

This is Oregon's best shot as it heads into the tournament healthy and experienced.

"I think the team is tournament-ready," Runge said. "Our depth has been our greatest strength."

Shaq and Runge recognized for stellar season

Oregon wasn't completely void of respect this season.

Runge was named Pac-10 Coach of

Turn to **WOMEN**, Page 12

UO's Rosemond anticipates facing familiar foes on Wednesday

Oregon Men's Notes



Rob Moseley

On Wednesday night, Oregon junior guard Yasir Rosemond will get the chance to play in a game with the team he always dreamed of playing with when he was younger.

Oddly enough, that will be the Ducks' first-round National Invitation Tournament opponent, Georgia Tech.

"What a blessing to be playing Georgia Tech," said Rosemond, a College Park, Ga., native. "I always wanted to go to Georgia Tech, but they took Stephon Marbury, so they got the better end of the deal, I guess."

Rosemond said he's quite familiar with a few of the Yellow Jackets, having played in pick-up games with many of them during summers back in Atlanta.

"They're a pretty good team, but we'll come out on top," Rosemond said. "I've played with them whole summers. Dion [Glover], Jason Floyd, Alvin Jones — we played all the time at a place call Run and Shoot."

Rosemond said the Yellow Jackets style

of play should remind Duck fans of Oregon's most recent opponent.

"They're similar to Cal, probably not as athletic," Rosemond said. "Cal has the big guys like Lampley and Elson, they've got [Jason] Collier and Alvin Jones."

Collier, a junior transfer from Indiana, leads the team with 17.5 points per game, while Jones grabbed nearly 10 rebounds per game this season. Jones was also third in the nation with 3.7 blocked shots per game.

The Bubble Bursts

Word out of Lawrence, Kan., is that Oregon was one of the last four teams cut by the NCAA Tournament selection committee, despite the Ducks' 16-11 overall record.

"I think it says a lot about this program to be sitting at home and looking at the NCAA pairings this afternoon and hear them make the comment that it took until this morning to take Oregon off the bubble," Kent said on Sunday. "That tells you what the coaches on that committee think about

this basketball team."

Seeing Washington earn a seventh seed fueled minor speculation that the Ducks may have had a decent shot, but perhaps more interesting to the Oregon team was the case of another seventh seed.

Minnesota earned the seventh seed and a chance to play Gonzaga in the first round of the West Regional. The Gophers finished 17-10, a game better than Oregon.

Who knew that the Ducks' 72-61 loss at Minnesota on Nov. 30 would be the difference between a berth in the Big Dance and one in the NIT?

Certainly not head coach Ernie Kent, although Kent isn't lamenting the position Oregon finds itself in.

"It's just a great reward," Kent said. "A great reward to this program and a great reward to a great college basketball town."

Second-Half Success

Although that comment would not have been heard from Kent before this season

"I always wanted to go to Georgia Tech, but they took Stephon Marbury, so they got the better end of the deal, I guess."

Yasir Rosemond
Oregon point guard

Turn to **MEN**, Page 9