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Oregon Emerald SPORTS

Best Bet
Major League Baseball
Baseball Preview Special
7 p.m., ESPN



Settling for the NIT not in Ducks' plans

Oregon plans to continue its stellar second-half play and dance at the 2000 NCAAAs

By Tim Pyle
Oregon Daily Emerald

After the fact, human nature is to ask, "What if?"

But consider this:

Of the Oregon men's basketball team's 13 losses this season, eight were by less than seven points or in overtime.

The other five defeats?

One at NCAA Tournament-qualifier Minnesota in a game that the Ducks led 39-25 at halftime, two at the hands of preseason No. 1 and Pacific-10 Conference champion Stanford and two lopsided losses in the National Invitation Tournament's final four that mercifully ended an exhausting — both emotionally and physically — season.

What if Oregon had been able to pull out just one or two of the numerous heart-breaking losses it suffered in the first half of the Pac-10 season?

The Ducks, who reportedly were one of the last at-large teams swept from the NCAA Tournament selection committee's planner, would have made their first appearance at the Big Dance since 1995.

And then, who knows what would have happened with Oregon in the groove it found in the second half of the season?

Perhaps Gonzaga would not have been the only Northwestern surprise at the tournament.

But that will have to wait until next season — a season that looks extremely promising for a still-developing team that loses seniors Terik Brown and Mike Carson while adding Utah transfer David Jackson and junior-college guard Anthony Norwood.

"I'm excited," junior

forward A.D. Smith said. "David's going to be real fired up to play and will definitely help us, and I think Anthony is a good player."

As the finishing touches dry on this season, a roller coaster that featured both thrills and spills, one thing is evident: The Ducks survived.

Despite the myriad of tough losses and the departures of juniors Mike McShane and Donte Quinine that punctuated an abysmal 2-8 start to the Pac-10 season, Oregon kept its head above water and even reversed direction against the seemingly swift and deadly current threatening to sink it.

"There is such a fine line at this level and in the Pac-10 between winning and losing games, and they had some misfortune," Oregon State head coach Eddie Payne said. "To their credit, they kept their focus, they stayed together and then they got the victories."

Despite the season-ending losses to California in the semifinals and Xavier in the third-place game of the NIT, Oregon went 9-4 after its second two-point loss to UCLA on Feb. 4.

Junior-college transfers Alex Scales and Darius Wright blossomed on the perimeter, Brown rekindled his scoring flame, Carson ran the court with unusual effectiveness for a 7-footer and Smith schooled his flashier opponents in the fundamentals.

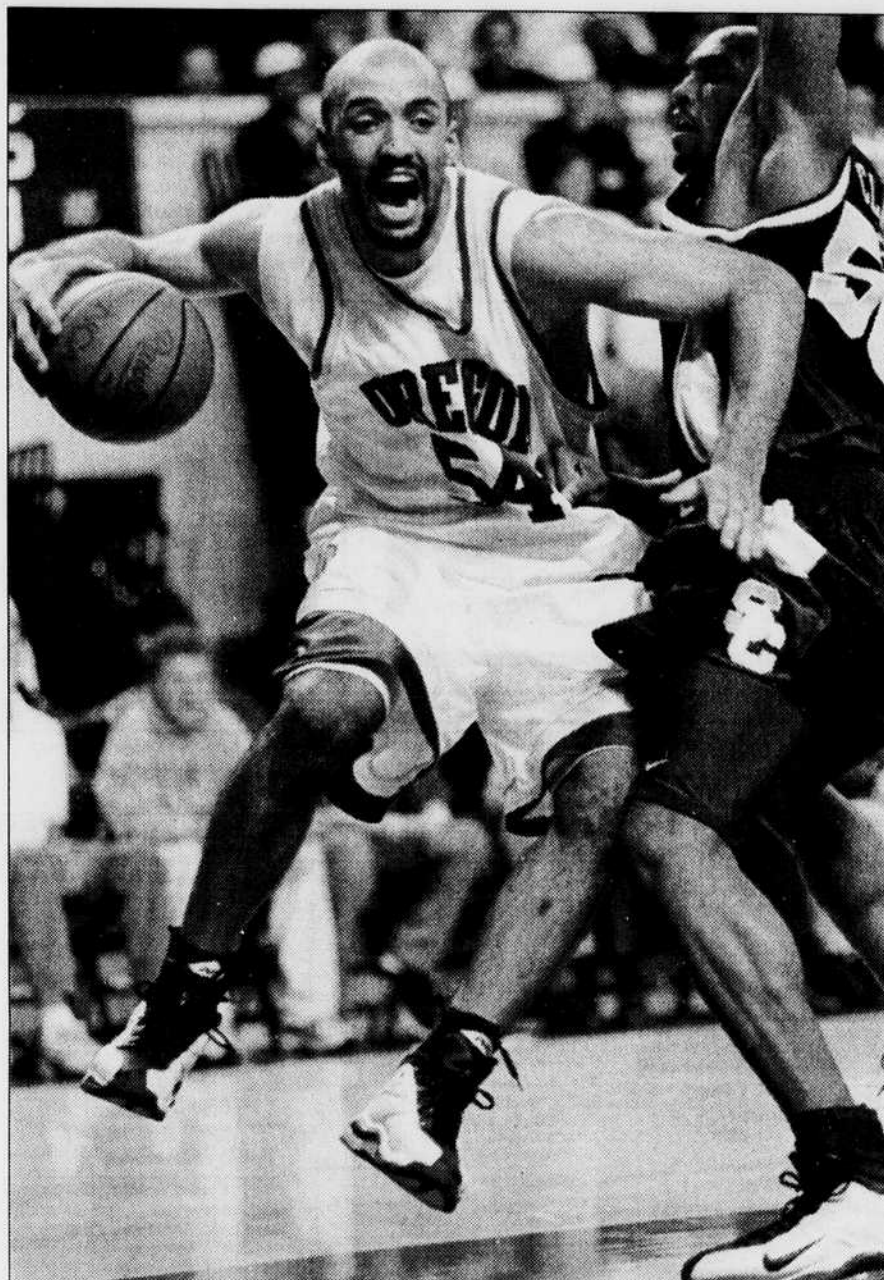
In convincing home victories over Washington and California, fans at McArthur Court saw the Ducks at their up-tempo, exciting best.

A 67-64 first-round win over Georgia Tech in the NIT showcased Mac Court to a national ESPN audience and showed that Oregon could indeed gut out a close one.

Then, a resounding home victory over Wyoming and an impressive road win at Texas Christian gave Oregon an unlikely spring break in New York.

Although that trip ended in disappointment, the journey, in retrospect, was definitely a wild ride.

"I think it was an outstanding year, all things considered," Ducks athletic director Bill Moos said. "A very strong



Nick Medley/Emerald

The Ducks will need passionate inside play like this from sophomore post Flo Hartenstein next season.

building year in regards to Ernie Kent and his long-range visions."

Smith takes some solace in the second-half accomplishments but still laments the overall shortcomings.

"I really wanted to make the tournament, and I felt we had a team that could get us there," said Smith, who paced the team in rebounding and was second in scoring.

However, even though Brown missed his last shot at glory in the Big Dance, he said he can find satisfaction in what did happen.

"I can't be disappointed," said Brown,

who was third on the team in scoring and finished his career second on Oregon's all-time three-pointers list. "There are some things that I did want to achieve and didn't, but overall I have to be content with what we did do."

Next season, Smith may get his wish, as Pac-10 all-newcomer honorees Scales, the team's leading scorer, and Wright join him as returning starters.

And talented freshmen Freddie Jones and Chris Christoffersen, guard Yasir Rosemond, posts Skouson Harker and Flo Hartenstein and the two new addi-

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Tough crowd awaits hot Oregon in ASU tournament

The No. 19 Ducks face 'the best field' they have seen starting with today's first round at the Ping/ASU Invitational in Phoenix

By Mirjam Swanson
Oregon Daily Emerald

A good performance at the Ping/Arizona State Invitational, one of the toughest events of the season, would help to propel the No. 19 Oregon women's golf team into the stretch run of the season on a positive note.

"This is definitely the best field we've seen all year," Ducks head coach Renee Baumgartner said. "We know we're going to have to play well to accomplish our goals."

Seven of the nation's top eight teams, and 13 of the top 25, will be present at the 17-team competition, which begins today in Phoenix.

All of the Ducks' Pac-10 rivals will be

there, including No. 4 Arizona, No. 5 Stanford, No. 6 USC and host No. 7 Arizona State. Also represented will be the nation's top-ranked team, Duke, as well as No. 3 Tulsa.

"The short game is key," Baumgartner said. "If you putt and chip well, you'll play well."

This weekend's tournament will be the first for Oregon since its dominating victory at the Colby Classic on March 22 and 23. The Ducks won that event by a startling 51 strokes, as they finished with a score of 606 in two rounds of play.

Oregon was led by senior Karen Bris-

tow, who claimed her second individual title of the season by recording a score of 144.

In second place was Oregon's Angie Rizzo with 150, while sophomore Dawn Berry came in third place with 156.

In the end, the Ducks finished play at the Colby Classic recording seven of the top eight finishes.

Oregon will need to continue that type of efficient play this weekend to be successful when it faces several of the most talented golfers in the country.

Among the top entrants partaking in this weekend's 72-par competition are 1998 U.S. Amateur champion Grace Park of Arizona State and 1998 U.S. Open runner-up Jenny Chuasiriporn of Duke.



BAUMGARTNER