



First baseman Maegan Christie stretches to nip Oregon State's Jenni Jodoin in the Ducks' dramatic 6-5, game 1 victory Saturday.

Nick Medley/Emerald

Softball

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of the way she hit it," Gamez said. "I was leaning to one side, hoping that it would stay in and it did."

The Oregon bench erupted out of the dugout to give Welch a hero's welcome at home plate, while the Beavers dejectedly trotted off the field to prepare for game 2.

"One of the things I tell the kids is that as long as we have one out in the ballgame, we still have a chance to win it," Gamez said. "There was a great example of that."

In a battle of precocious freshmen pitchers, McMurren and Draper dominated game 2.

The Beavers did touch McMurren, a graduate of North Eugene, for eight hits but could not manufacture a run.

Meanwhile, Draper, who entered the day with an 11-3 record and 1.42 ERA, tossed matching zeros, allowing just one Duck hit through the first five innings.

But Robinson finally broke the scoreless tie when she launched a one-out missile over the left center-field alley in the bottom of the sixth. The homer was Robinson's co-team-leading ninth and gave

Oregon 48 dingers, one short of the team record of 49 set last season.

And then McMurren improved to 8-4 by squashing Oregon State's last gasp in the top of the seventh.

After retiring the Beavers' Brooke Rutschman on a ground-out to third, McMurren surrendered back-to-back walks to Jodi Chmielewski and Beyster.

Oregon State catcher Kim Herman then stepped to the plate and nailed a line drive just foul down the left-field line, which Gamez acknowledged by signaling for Ducks pitcher Danielle Haag to warm up.

But Haag would not be needed.

Shortstop Holly Ray fielded Herman's ground ball, flipped to Andrea Gustafson at second base for the inning's second out, and Gustafson threw home to Coe, who blocked the plate beautifully in tagging out Chmielewski, who was trying to score from second base.

"I don't know if the runner ever got to home plate because Missy blocked it so well," Gamez said.

And so, for the second straight game, Oregon prevailed with a close and convenient game-clinching play.

Sports Briefs

Football springs into off-season action

For the first time since its Christmas Day loss to Colorado at the Aloha Bowl, the Oregon football team will converge today and begin spring practice.

Mike Bellotti will be starting the pursuit of a fourth bowl game in his first five years as the Ducks head coach. He will also try to

add to a school-best 30 wins in his first four seasons at the helm next fall, when Oregon kicks off the season with a Sept. 4 nonconference game at Michigan State of the Big Ten Conference.

Foremost among Bellotti's concerns this spring will be finding a replacement for starting quarterback Akili Smith, a probable first-round pick in the April 17 NFL Draft who broke a plethora of

school records last season on his way to Pacific-10 Conference co-offensive player of the year honors.

Junior A.J. Feeley and sophomore Joey Harrington are the top contenders for the quarterback vacancy.

"A.J. Feeley and Joey Harrington are probably the least experienced quarterbacks we've had vying for the starting role since

Danny O'Neil [1991]," Bellotti said in a released statement. "But both are good size athletes with good foot skills. A.J. probably has a little stronger arm, while Joey may be a little more mobile."

Men golfers tee off today at invitational

Coming off an impressive victory at its own Duck Invitational

during spring break, the No. 27 Oregon men's golf team will be in action again today at the Western Intercollegiate event in Santa Cruz, Calif.

Among the teams that the Ducks will face at the 18-team event will be No. 23 Texas-El Paso, No. 24 UC Irvine, as well as Pacific-10 Conference competitors from California, Stanford and Oregon State.

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