

Ducks in action at tourneys

■ The men head up I-5 for the Salem Shootout, while the women travel south to Palo Alto, Calif.

Both the men's and women's tennis teams play in tournaments this weekend.

The men travel to Salem to compete in the Salem Shootout, while the women head to Palo Alto, Calif., for the Rolex Invitational.

The men's team continues its road show, with this trip just two days after it returned from a tour-

namment in Seattle. Head coach Chris Russell hopes to use this to his advantage.

"This is good for us," Russell said. "The more matches we play back-to-back, the better off we'll be. As the old saying goes, if you fall off the horse, it's best to jump right back on — although I don't think we fell off, per say."

Two Ducks looking to build on last week's success are Joaquin Hamdan and Leslie Esinga.

The Salem Shootout features Washington, Minnesota, Portland and the Ducks in eight flights of

singles and four flights of doubles.

For the women, the Rolex Invitational is the first chance to play in nearly a month. Head coach Jack Griffin is eager for his squad to get back on the court.

"The lay-off helped us because it gave our newcomers a chance to grow and mature," Griffin said. "But I think we're ready to play someone else for a change."

The tournament features a 128-player singles draw and a 14-team doubles draw.

Matt O'Neill

Men

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ranked in the top-20. Beside Oregon, Pac-10 rivals No. 4 Arizona, No. 5 Stanford and No. 15 Arizona State will be competing, as well as No. 18 Portland, the meet host.

"At the Pac-10 meet we were able to beat a really good Arizona State team that had beaten us at the Pre-NCAAs and we'd like to do the same," Fein said. "The focus for us is really on trying to place in the top three at districts

because obviously Stanford and Arizona are really great teams."

Oregon hopes to have an edge over its competitors because the race will be only a short Interstate 5 drive north, as opposed to previous races in Minnesota and Indiana.

"Hopefully it will be a tremendous advantage," Smith said. "It will be a lot less wear-and-tear on us from a traveling perspective. And with it being close to Eugene, there should be a lot of people and fans giving us support."

A difference the regional race

poses from the others is that it will be a 10K race instead of the usual 8K.

"We do prepare for the difference in length and we're ready for it," Smith said. "It's definitely a factor considering that it adds on an additional six minutes and thirty seconds of running."

Should Fein win his fourth straight individual title, and senior Andrew Bliss continue his effective fall performance, then the Ducks will step right in where they belong — the national championship.

Women

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The field of teams is also as deep as ever with No. 1 Stanford, No. 9 Arizona State, No. 10 Washington, No. 14 UCLA, No. 24 Arizona and No. 25 Oregon leading the way.

"It's a very strong field and we know this is pretty serious stuff," Heinonen said. "The first championship meet [the Pacific-10 Conference Championships on Oct. 30] was an experiment and with

that under our belts, we feel we can do a whole lot better."

A big factor in the Ducks 6th place finish at Pac-10's was the sweltering near-90 degree heat that plagued many of Oregon's runners. With Saturday's race being in Portland, the Ducks expect a much stronger all-around performance.

"Our team is really ready for a great team effort," freshman Amy Nickerson said. "We were all ready to have a great race at Pac-10's, but the heat factor didn't let that happen. We've put a lot into

our training these past couple of weeks and as long as we keep the right mindset at regionals, we'll do a lot better."

Should the Ducks falter this weekend, the season could still go on for Nickerson, freshman Tara Struyk and junior Rhiannon Glenn, who would seem to be on track to qualify as individuals for nationals with a top-25 placing this weekend.

But with Crabb back in the mix, the Ducks seem to be in the right position to secure an at-large berth.

Sports briefs

Oregon men's tennis sign big-time recruit

In one of the biggest signings in the last five years, Oregon men's tennis head coach Chris Russell announced Thursday that Paul "Buck" Mink will join the Ducks next season.

Mink is ranked No. 45 nationally coming out of high school in Carrollton, Texas.

Russell said Mink chose Oregon ahead of Baylor, Texas and Illinois — all programs ranked in the top 10.

Wrestling also announces signing

Luke Larwin is the first recruit of the fall signing period to commit to joining Chuck Kearney's wrestling team next season, the head coach announced Thursday.

Larwin finished third in the state 4A wrestling championships last season for Mountain View High School in Bend. He's also a three-time Oregon National Team member and has won the state Freestyle Championship.

Additional signings are expected early next week.

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