

Men's Pac-10

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and Gonzaga and with Pac-10 play looming, the talk about the Ducks in the NCAA Tournament is in full force.

But in order for Oregon to make its first tournament appearance since 1995 — and just its second since 1961 — the Ducks must improve upon the individual consistency of many of its players. Most notable is center Flo Hartenstein, who has not yet shown that he is capable of securing the inside game, and if he doesn't improve, expect junior college transfer Julius Hicks to step into his spot.

The high-flying antics of senior forward Alex Scales and sophomore guard Freddie Jones will again lead the offensive attack but will be needing the help of guard David Jackson later on in the season. Jackson, who recently underwent surgery on his knee, will be sidelined at least two to three weeks.



4. Oregon State

Head coach: Eddie Payne

Player to watch: DeAundra Tanner, PG

Outlook: At first glance, it might be surprising to see Oregon State in the top four in the league, but you must remember these aren't the same Beavers of old. Or are they?

Oregon State returns four starters from a year ago, and most have been together for three years. This experienced bunch, led by DeAundra Tanner, will vault a program that has not had a winning season since Gary Payton was a senior in 1990 into postsea-

son play. The Beavers are near the top of the league in every defensive category and also lead the Pac-10 in three-point shooting.

Last year, Gill Coliseum proved to be a huge factor in Beaver home wins over UCLA, Oregon, Stanford and Arizona. The only problem was that the Beavers went 0-9 on the road in league play.

Obviously road wins must be a priority, especially at such places as Washington State — a site, believe it or not, the Beavers haven't won at since 1990.

5. California
Head Coach: Ben Braun
Player to watch: Sean Lampley, F
Outlook: The California Golden Bears are fresh off the NIT Championship that they captured last March in New York, and it looks as if the NIT will be the best Cal can hope for again this season.

A key to the season will be how well five freshmen and three sophomores — the youngest squad in the school's history — can adapt to Pac-10 play.

Leading the youngsters will be junior forward Sean Lampley who leads Cal in scoring, rebounding and minutes played.

The Bears have struggled against physical teams, but if they can weather the Arizonas and Stanfords, they should be NIT-bound.



6. UCLA (6-2)

Head coach: Steve Lavin
Player to watch: Earl Watson, PG

Outlook: The Bruins will endure their first season without current Charlotte Hornet Baron Davis in disappointing fashion.

One reason that the Bruins will lose games — as they have already against Gonzaga by 16 and against Colorado St. — is that teams have figured out that in order to beat the Bruins you must simply control the tempo.

Evidence to this method of winning can be traced all the way back to the first round of the 1996 NCAA Tournament when Princeton upset the Bruins by dictating the way the game would be played.

The Bruins may have six wins already, but the wins came against Iona, Fairfield, Morgan State, DePaul, Maine and South Florida.

Enough said.



7. Arizona State (8-3)

Head coach: Rob Evans

Player to watch: Eddie House, G

Outlook: Six true freshmen. One true star.

Arizona State's season will be decided on how far veteran guard Eddie House can take them, which will not be very far in the talent-laden Pac-10.

The six true freshmen on the team equal the total of Northwestern and Duke as the most on an Division I roster, but with House and his Pac-10-leading 20.6 points per game, anything is possible.



8. Southern California (7-5)

Head coach: Henry Bibby

Player to watch: Brian Scalabrine, C

Outlook: Oregon fans remember Adam Spanich — he of the famous six points in 2.8 seconds in USC's 85-84 win over

the Ducks at Mac Court — and are not sad to hear that he has graduated.

Southern California, however, is singing a much different tune as his three-point shooting touch is sorely missed. Without an outside game, opponents are focusing on shutting down Brian Scalabrine down low and are coming away victorious.

Scalabrine, last season's Pac-10 newcomer of the year, will be expected to do much more this year and will need to be helped greatly by point guard Brandon Granville.



9. Washington State (5-4)

Head coach: Paul Graham

Player to watch: Jan-Michael Thomas, G

Outlook: Washington State players are talking about having a chance to play in March. And in a

way, they will be right, sort of.

You see, the Cougars close out their Pac-10 schedule by playing three games in March.

Realistically, the best first-year coach Paul Graham can hope for is to finish above Washington ... and they will.



10. Washington (5-7)

Head coach: Bob Bender

Player to watch: Deon Luton, G

Outlook: The only thing professional-like of the Washington Huskies this season is the arena they play in — Seattle's Key Arena, home of NBA's Sonics — while their on-campus arena is being renovated.

Washington enters conference play as the only team with a losing record, and expect the losing ways to continue and its streak of four-straight postseason berths to come to a crashing halt.

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