

Ducks do some damage at tournament Tuesday

■ Oregon proves its mettle by taking third at the Cleveland Southwest Intercollegiate

By Peter Hockaday
for the Emerald

For the first time this season, the Oregon men's golf team is thinking post-season instead of practice on the plane ride home from a tournament. Oregon finished third overall at the Cleveland Southwest Invitational in Westlake Village, California Tuesday, the best result in a major tournament for the Ducks so far this year. In another important first for Oregon, senior co-captain Ryan Lavoie became the first Oregon player to win a tournament this

season. His win was the first individual crown for the Ducks since Adrian Burtner won the Oregon Duck Invitational last spring. Lavoie shot a two-under par 211 to win the tournament by a stroke over Oregon State's John Lepack.

Junior T.J. Duncan continued to shine for the Ducks. After a strong pair of rounds on Monday, Duncan shot a one-over par 72 Tuesday and finished in a four-way tie for eighth. Head coach Steve Nosler cited Duncan's play as a bright spot for his entire team. Duncan's effort was "infectious," Nosler said. "It'll be a confidence builder for everyone."

Senior co-captain Andrew Tredway elevated his play on the final day of the tournament, shooting a one-over par 72 Tuesday after a two-round, 10-over par effort Monday. Tredway, with an 11-over par 224, finished 37th overall.

Other Oregon finishers were sophomore Brandon Harnden (224, tied for 37th) and junior Matt Genovese (231, tied for 67th).

Oregon is finally playing to their potential as a team, Nosler said. The team's new togetherness could be contributing to their improved play.

"There is a great deal of compatibility among this group," Nosler said of his starting five golfers. Although it would seem as if he has found his lineup for the rest of the



season, Nosler insists he will continue to rotate in younger players like sophomore Aaron Byers and freshman Chris Carnahan.

The competition in California was among the toughest the Ducks have faced all year. Nine top-25 teams played in the Southwest.

Seven of them lost to Oregon. Only No. 8 Arizona State (279), who won the tournament, and No. 7 Brigham Young (862), placing second, finished in front of the Ducks.

The competition, and Oregon's performance, prove that the Ducks are ready for the post-season, according to Nosler. Only three tournaments, including the Oregon Duck Invitational, remain before post-season play begins at the Pacific-10 Championships in late April.

Other Pac-10 teams to finish in

the top ten at the Southwest were No. 21 Washington (6th overall, 880), host and No. 16 Southern California (tied for 8th, 886), Oregon State (tied for 8th, 886) and No. 12 Stanford (10th, 889).

While the tournaments now don't directly affect the team's chances for the post-season, Oregon's play at the Southwest is a sign that the team should improve as the year progresses.

If last year is any indicator, the Ducks should be jumping up and down about their next tournament. The Oregon Duck Invitational, held at Shadow Hills Country Club in Junction City, was the site of Oregon's only team win last spring.

Oregon's only tournament this month, the invitational, will be held March 20 and 21.

Now the spotlight falls on different Atlanta reliever

By Paul Newberry
The Associated Press

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Kerry Ligtenberg spent most of the past year in relative quiet. He fished. He biked. He went to the movies.

Then, John Rocker opened his mouth — and everything changed for the soft-spoken Ligtenberg.

Suddenly, his comeback from Tommy John elbow surgery became a major issue at spring training for Atlanta.

Would Ligtenberg be able to fill the closer's role while Rocker was suspended for offensive comments against much of the human race? More important, would

Ligtenberg show he was healthy enough to allow Atlanta the option of trading Rocker once the suspension was served?

These are weighty issues for someone who has not pitched for nearly 17 months in a game that counted.

"I'm not here trying to replace John Rocker," Ligtenberg said. "My approach is the same whether he's here or not here. I just want to make sure I'm healthy, so when opening day rolls around I'll be ready to go."

Ligtenberg was Atlanta's closer two years ago, becoming the first rookie in a dozen years to save 30 games. He was an inspiring story, a would-be chemical engineer who just couldn't walk away from the game he loved.

With a tip from former catcher Greg Olson, Atlanta discovered Ligtenberg in the lowly Prairie League. Within two years, he was pitching in the big leagues. In 1998, when Mark Wohlers could no longer throw strikes, Ligtenberg became closer for a team that reached the NL championship series.

The following spring, Ligtenberg felt a stinging pain in his right elbow, the result of a torn medial collateral ligament. His season was over before it began. His career was in jeopardy, too.

"It hurt a little extra for a guy like him," manager Bobby Cox said. "He had never made much money, and he was on the road to it. But it set him back only one year. I

think he's still going to have a great career."

Ligtenberg is the antithesis of the man who replaced him as closer. Unlike the bombastic Rocker, he speaks in a quiet monotone with little hint of emotion. He is a couple of inches shorter than Rocker, whose devotion to weight lifting gives him the upper body of a linebacker. Ligtenberg's strength is concentrated in his waist and legs.

This spring, Ligtenberg's every move is being monitored. For the first week, he could throw only fastballs. After getting clearance to throw sliders, he felt stiffness in his arm. Atlanta ordered a couple of days off, even though this sort of pain is considered normal in the comeback process.

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