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It's crunch time for golfers

■ The men's golf team will try to do what the women could not — win in Tempe

By Peter Hockaday
 for the Emerald

While it may be raining outside, the sun is shining on the men's golf team.

But then again, the sun always shines in Arizona.

The Oregon men's golf team has recovered fully from a poor start this winter and is now performing well on the brink of the postseason. But as the women's team found out last weekend, Arizona can be unkind to teams on a roll.

The men are in Tempe, Ariz., today for the Thunderbird Invitational. The Arizona State-hosted event boasts a field of 17 teams — 15 of which are among the top 50. Last week the women went into Tempe under similar conditions and finished 13th of 15 teams.

As if that weren't enough competition, Oregon will once again battle top Pacific-10 Conference foes, No. 4 ASU, No. 12 Arizona, No. 16 Southern California and No. 20 UCLA. At the Western Intercollegiate last week, the Ducks placed first among six Pac-10 schools.

Senior co-captain Ryan Lavoie was able to stave off the Pac-10 competition at the Western last week as he led the Ducks to a fourth-place finish. Last year, Lavoie dominated down the home stretch of the season, pacing the Ducks at the Pac-10 championships and making the final cut — the only Oregon golfer to do so — at the NCAA Championships.

Lavoie will need to work his magic again if the Ducks want to make the NAAs for the third year in a row. The last time the Ducks made three straight NCAA Championships was in 1976-78, when now tour pro Peter Jacobsen led Oregon to three top-11 finishes at college golfer's Super Bowl.

Senior co-captain Andrew Tredway, freshman Chris Carnahan and juniors T.J. Duncan and Matt Genovese round out the Oregon team.

The surprising Duncan will be a key for the Ducks in Tempe. Duncan had placed eighth and fifth at the Southwest and Duck Invationals, respectively, before a dismal 86th at the Western Intercol-

legiate last week. Oregon's performance at those tournaments mirrored Duncan's play: the Ducks took third at the Southwest, second at the Duck and fifth at the Western.

Another Oregon player to watch is redshirt freshman Chris Carnahan. The Albany native had an impressive fall season, finishing with the second-best stroke average on the team over the course of four tournaments. After head coach Steve Nosler kept him home for the Cleveland/Southwest Intercollegiate in February, Carnahan came back with a vengeance, placing 19th at the Duck and 14th last week at the Western.

With the Pac-10 Championships in two weeks, there will be no better preparation for Oregon than the Thunderbird Invitational. While the Ducks took on the conference lightweights last week and won, this weekend they will need to beat the heavyweight Arizona schools as well as all those other Pac-10 teams.

The Thunderbird Invitational is at the Karsten Golf Course, the site of the Pac-10 Championships in two weeks. The golfers will play two 18-hole rounds on Saturday and one 18-hole round on Sunday.



Blazers defeat struggling Spurs

By Kelley Shannon
 The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Rasheed Wallace scored 27 points to lead the Portland Trail Blazers to a 93-77 victory Thursday night over the San Antonio Spurs, who struggled without an injured Tim Duncan.

The Blazers shot 56.5 percent from the field for the game, a season high for a Spurs opponent. Portland amassed a 55-39 lead by halftime, and added to that edge in the third period. A 3-pointer by Steve Smith put the Blazers ahead 68-47 midway through the quarter.

San Antonio, trailed 77-59 at the start of the fourth and by double digits the rest of the way.

Duncan watched from the sidelines, out with a cartilage tear in his left knee. An MRI exam Thursday detected the tear, from when he attempted a dunk against Sacramento on Tuesday. He's also listed as doubtful for Saturday's key Midwest Division showdown against Utah.

Duncan averaged 19 points and seven rebounds in the Spurs' previous three games against the Blazers this season. In the last meeting, a Spurs victory on March 28, he had 36 points and

15 rebounds.

His injury is a big setback for San Antonio as the defending NBA champion embarks on the final stretch of the regular season with hopes of improving its playoff position to gain home-court advantage in the first round. San Antonio is fifth in the Western Conference, 1 1/2 games behind the fourth-place Phoenix Suns.

Samaki Walker started in place of Duncan, scoring 13 points and grabbing 10 rebounds before leaving with a dislocated finger in the fourth quarter. David Robinson led the Spurs with 16 points and added nine rebounds.

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