

Emeralds

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place up," said second basemen Blake Blasi, who was a 10th round draft pick out of Wichita State this year. "Everybody is really excited to play in front of them and get it going."

That much so was evident in the team's BP session. Balls were flying out of the park on a regular basis as it appears the power supply of the 2000 Ems is fully loaded.

Ems manager Danny Sheaffer would casually crack a smile every time one of his pitches would end up over the Oregon Lottery sign in left, the Honey Bucket sign in center or the Serenity Lane sign in right.

"We're going to hit some balls out of the ballpark," said Sheaffer, who is eager to begin his second year as a manager. "We have some guys that are young, but they've got some ability. We don't have a whole lot of question marks."

One question that does arise, however, is the pitching. But with 14 pitchers on the roster the Ems should be able to find enough quality arms to carry them through the grind of their 76 game season.

Helping out for at least the first couple of weeks will be 27-year-old pitcher Rich Barker, who is down in Eugene on a rehabilitation assignment to recover from shoulder surgery. Barker is a valu-

able asset to the team as he brings the all-so important credentials of having major league experience.

Last spring, when Cubs starter Kevin Tapani was put on the injured list, Barker was called up from Triple-A Iowa to fulfill his lifelong dream. And although he only made five appearances in a brief 16-day stay, the environment was one he said he'll never forget and one he hopes to return to sometime soon.

"It was an awesome experience," said Barker, who is by far the oldest player on the team. "I just picked their brains and the guys were great. Kerry Wood, [Steve] Trachsel, [Rod] Beck and [Mark] Grace were all willing to share information with me. And so now when my teammates ask me questions, I try to help out as much as I can."

Another person who is helping out a great deal is catcher Yoon-Min Kweon's interpreter. Kweon was signed by the Cubs last fall off his Korean Junior National team and is the headliner of the team's nine foreign players. Kweon's interpreter will be the middle man between Kweon and his coaches and also with the media.

"I've never had that before so it's going to be a little difficult," Sheaffer said. "But baseball is a universal language. I can use sign language and also I think I can express my point enough just by facial expressions."

Sheaffer also said he expects his face to be a little less heated this coming season. He said that last season was a learning experience for him, as he had to make the hard transition from playing to coaching.

"Last year I hit the ground running and it was really hard for me because I was still in a player mode," said Sheaffer, who has 17 years of professional experience. "Some of the lessons that I learned about expectations and development, I'll be able to apply this year."

"And my blood pressure should be a little bit lower than it was last year."

A key to keeping that blood pressure low will be to get off to a hot start, unlike a season ago in which the Ems began their inaugural campaign as a Cub affiliate at a dismal 0-6. Things didn't get better as they finished last place in the Southern Division of the Northwest League with a record of 29-47.

But this is practically a whole new team, with the only returnees being pitchers Francis Beltran and Jose Cueto.

It all starts tonight when the Ems battle the 1999 Northwest League Champion Spokane Indians at 7:05 p.m. in Avista Stadium.

"It's going to be exciting to play them," Sheaffer said. "It's going to come down to pitching. We're going to catch it and we're going to hit it. We've just got to throw it."

Athletes awarded recognitions

■ Oregon honored athletes with a postseason banquet, while a few individuals were recognized by the Pac-10

By Jeff Smith

Oregon Daily Emerald

The 1999-2000 Oregon athletic season may have ended three weeks ago, but the accolades keep coming on in.

At the top of the list are the prestigious Pacific-10 Conference Medal awards, which are given to each school's outstanding male and female student-athlete who showed the "greatest combination of performance and achievement in scholarship, athletics and leadership."

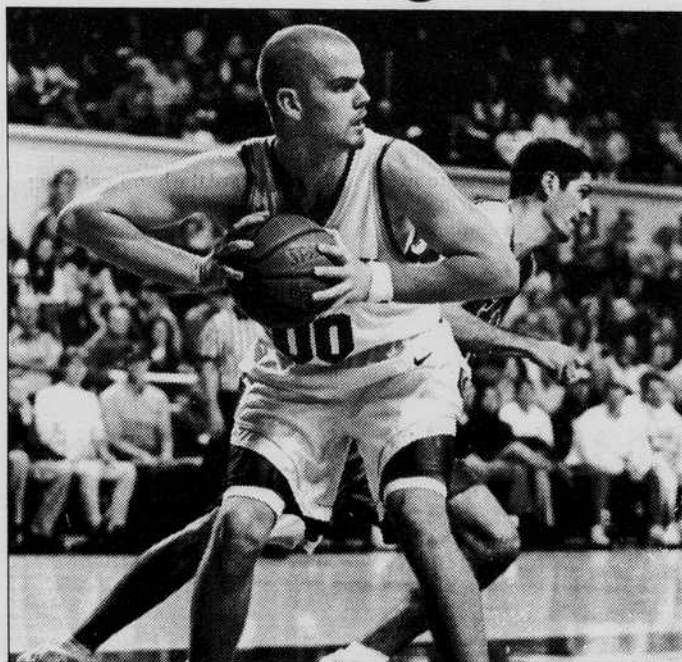
The Oregon recipients for this season were seniors A.D. Smith of the men's basketball team and Anika Heuser of the women's golf team.

The two both performed admirably in and out of the classroom, in leading their teams to the NCAA Basketball Tournament and NCAA Women's Golf Championships, respectively.

Smith became the first player in Oregon history to rank in the top-10 in field goal percentage (.512), free throw shooting (.780) and three-point shooting (.389). To top it off, he completed his first year of graduate school, after already earning his degree in business administration last spring with a GPA of 3.55.

Heuser finished off her memorable Duck career with a scoring average of 77.7. Her highlight of the season was finishing tied for 11th with an average round of 75 at the Pac-10 Championships — the second-best performance in Oregon history. Even more impressive was her average in the classroom, as the Wuppertal, Germany native finished with a 4.02 GPA in business administration.

The softball team (36-29) was the highlight of the spring sports season as it appeared in its third consecutive NCAA Tournament. In a banquet held earlier this month the team presented its an-



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A.D. Smith was honored with the Pac-10 Medal for his work on and off the court.

nual postseason awards.

To the surprise of nobody, senior Jill Robinson was selected as the team's Most Valuable Player. The slugger set the Oregon career home run record (32), the single season mark (15) and the career record for runs scored (154).

Two freshmen who had just as much to do with the success as anybody were also awarded for their efforts. Andrea Vidlund was named Newcomer of the Year and Alyssa Laux was tabbed as the Most Inspirational Player.

Vidlund boasted the best pitching record on the squad with a 17-8 mark. She threw the first Oregon no-hitter since 1989, when she beat Portland 8-0 on March 18. Vidlund had 96 strikeouts on the year and allowed only 54 earned runs in 146 innings of work.

Laux was the Ducks' second leading hitter in the NCAA Tournament, going five-for-13 for a .385 clip in four games.

On the men's track side, senior long distance runner Steve Fein earned the Most Inspirational

award and the Bill Dellinger Cross Country Award. The Outstanding Athlete award went to sophomore high jumper Jason Boness, who finished off his first season as a Duck with All-American honors. And just last Wednesday, the Pac-10 named Boness as the league's Newcomer of the Year.

Senior long jumper Nat Johnson was given the Most Improved honor and sophomore decathlete Santiago Lorenzo was presented with the High Point Scorer award.

For the women, sophomore heptathlete Jenny Kenyon was tabbed as the Most Improved while senior long distance runner Annie Ebner was voted Most Inspirational. Freshman Amy Nickerson was given the Cross Country Award and fellow freshman Mary Etter was awarded with the High Point Scorer award for her work in the discus and hammer.

Senior Katie Crabb and junior Karis Howell were presented with co-Performer of the Year honors as each helped make up for a somewhat down season for the women.

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