



Best Bet
MLB: Arizona vs. Seattle
7 p.m., FoxSports Northwest

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NOTRE DAME DIDN'T ERN IT

■ Oregon men's basketball coach Ernie Kent turns his back on more money and national exposure to continue coaching at the school he once played for

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

The news broke during the early evening of Wednesday night: Oregon head basketball coach Ernie Kent was Notre Dame's No. 1 candidate to fill the Fighting Irish's head coaching vacancy.



The news finally reached a conclusion late Thursday night: Kent decided to stay at his beloved alma mater

and continue coaching the up-and-coming Ducks.

But between that approximate 30-hour window, Kent's name was being thrown around all over the nation on sports Web sites and TV stations.

Heck, he even was featured during the opening theme song of ESPN's SportsCenter late Wednesday night.

Which, in the end, seems to have worked out to Oregon's advantage — and you better believe Kent realizes this.

"It's been a hectic 48 hours for me, my family, my team and the administration," said Ken on Friday in a quick media telephone conference call. "At the same time, it's a tribute to have a school as prestigious as Notre Dame to ask to sit down with me."

Granted, Notre Dame is a top-notch school with a national reputation that is heads and shoulders above Oregon.

But what everybody seemed to be missing in this whole scenario is that Notre Dame's actual basketball program is not that much better than the one Oregon has going for itself.

Kent has built a solid program during his first three seasons with the Ducks, taking them to the NIT Final Four in 1999 and then to only its second NCAA Tournament appearance in 39 years this past season.

His team lost three valuable seniors in Alex Scales, A.D. Smith and Darius Wright, but the four recruits he has coming in are, in Kent's words, "special."

Headlined by McDonald's All-American Luke Ridnour — the No. 1-ranked point guard on the West Coast — the Ducks are building something in Eugene that has the potential to do great things. Ridnour will be joined by two of the top high school players in the West in forward Luke Jackson and guard James Davis. Minnesota prep standout Jay Anderson, a 6-9, 220-pound center, rounds out the class.

The foursome gives Oregon a recruiting class that was ranked No. 1 in the West.

Jackson, for one, was the first recruit to make public that half the reason he chose Oregon was because of Kent.

Kent insists that this Notre Dame experience will not affect his current recruiting this year or in the future, saying that it is "only a positive for recruiting."

Notre Dame, on the other hand, is also on the rise after its NIT appearance this season.

The Fighting Irish's overall record of 22-15 marked their most wins since the 1986-87 season. They were boosted greatly when consensus All-American forward Troy Murphy decided to return to the school for his junior season.

But it still wasn't enough to woo Kent, who interviewed for the job with Notre Dame athletic director Kevin White on Thursday in Washington, D.C.

Kent said that right away it was clear to both him and White that his love and loyalty belonged to Oregon and that it would be hard for him to leave.

"After sitting down with Notre Dame, I felt that there were a lot of unfinished goals at Oregon," said the 45-year-old Kent, who was a member of the Ducks during the 1970s. "We both agreed that I still had a tremendous amount of passion and a very strong drive towards reaching those goals I have set for my program."

That still didn't stop White from reportedly presenting Kent with a contract offer that would have been worth \$4.9 million — a seven-year deal for approximately \$700,000 a season. Kent currently has three more years left on his contract at Oregon, which pays him approximately \$420,000, so he proved that his decision was not about the money.

In the end, it all came down to his family, his school and the community of Eugene. Kent did grow up in Rockford, Ill., which is only a two-hour drive away from South Bend, Ind., but his family now calls Eugene home. His two eldest sons Marcus, 17, and Jordan, 15, are both prep

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Oregon fans will not have to say goodbye to the passionate coaching style of Ernie Kent. Kent liked Notre Dame, but said, "They have an outstanding program, but they could sense and I could sense what we have going on at Oregon."

Eugene Emeralds ride an upward swing to first-place seat

The recent success of the Ems puts Eugene baseball back in the winner's circle, and headed for a showdown for the Southern Division of the Northwest League Championship

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

After a loss earlier in the month, Eugene Emeralds manager Danny Sheaffer slowly shook his head in his office and seemed puzzled at his team's play.

"We just haven't been playing A-B-C baseball," Sheaffer said back then.

Almost two weeks have passed since that loss and the Emeralds are getting used to playing the type of baseball that awards you with three different letters in the alphabet.

Those letters would, of course, be W, I and N.

Winning is contagious, and the more you win the more you want to avoid losing.

"It's a pretty good feeling," right fielder Nic Jackson said. "We're a lot better of a team than we've been showing, and it's starting to come together for ourselves."

In the ninth inning on Sunday, however, the visiting Spokane Indians were threatening to steal the win. The Indians trailed 3-2, but had two men on and only one out.

Sheaffer then brought in relief pitcher Eric Albright, who proceeded to record two strikeouts to preserve the win and give his team its fifth win in six games.

At the exact moment when Albright's final pitch found catcher Ryan Jorgensen's mitt, Eugene general manager Bob Beban pumped his fist in celebration.

Beban's enthusiasm was echoed by the 3,383 fans who packed Civic Stadium for the season's first day game amid the 90-degree weather.

The win pushed the Ems (14-12) into sole possession of first place in the South Division of the Northwest League.

The Ems extended their first-place standing even more so last night when they beat the division rival Portland Rockies 8-3 on Monday night in Portland's Historic Civic Stadium to move one-and-a-half games ahead of the Rockies. The two teams close out the three-game set with games tonight and Wednesday.

This is the first time that the Ems

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Wilton Chavez continued his sparkling season on Sunday by pitching 6.1 innings, raising his record to 4-0. He also upped his strikeout total to 31, giving up only 12 walks.