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Basketball

continued from page 7

victories over Southern Oregon and Texas A&M Corpus Christi. The Vikings took Texas Pan American to overtime on the road, but lost 81-75. Portland finished last season sixth of eight teams in the West Coast Conference with a 10-18 record.

Oregon defeated Portland 74-62 at Mac Court last season.

"This is a big game on their schedule," Kent said. "We know that, and that's why it's a good game for us. They're going to be up, which is going to require us to be up."

Since playing Athletes in Action, Oregon has defeated Mississippi Valley State, Denver and Portland State by a combined 52 points in its three regular-season matchups.

But Kent feels his team is too inconsistent, and gave the Ducks a "C+" as a three-game grade.

"Can we be perfect? No," Kent said. "But we can certainly be somewhere between 90 and 100 percent of our capability, and we're not there yet."

The Ducks played tough defense Saturday night against Portland State, and with 30 minutes played, the Vikings had only 25 points. But then the Ducks let Portland State score 37 points in the final 10 minutes in a defensive melt-down.

Tonight's game, Bracey said, will give the Ducks a chance to show some consistency.

"We're excited to come out here and try to do everything right — offensively and defensively," Bracey said. "We want to showcase before

we go to Portland."

Kent, despite the average grade he gave his team, was optimistic about the Ducks' positive traits. The coach said Oregon is shooting well, and had gotten good play from the bench.

"It's just the experience we need to gain," Kent said.

The team's freshmen played well Saturday, Kent said, but are "still coming." Oregon's four freshmen — Luke Ridnour, Luke Jackson, James Davis and Jay Anderson — combined for 39 points Saturday night.

"All four stepped up," senior guard Freddie Jones said. "We expect them to do that."

“Can we be perfect?

No. But we can certainly be somewhere between 90 and 100 percent of our capability, and we're not there yet.

Ernie Kent
Oregon men's
basketball coach

Jones and his teammates expected the high-profile recruiting class to make an immediate impact, but also realize that they are, after all, only freshmen.

The Ducks — freshmen included — will go for their fourth-straight win tonight on Mac Court. If Oregon gets the victory, it will be the Ducks' first 4-0 start under Kent.

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Cross country

continued from page 7

bid and advanced to its fourth straight national meet in Ames, Iowa.

The season finished on a low note for the Ducks, who were greeted with a nasty, minus 15-degree wind chill and 21-mile-per-hour winds. Already hampered by sickness, Oregon responded poorly to the conditions and finished a disappointing 28 out of 31 teams.

The future is uncertain for Heinonen and his team. With Smedstad, Katie Crabb and Rhianon Glenn all graduating, the returning runners will have expectations to step up their level of running without help from the team's three best runners.

Two sophomores with significant varsity and NCAA experience are Eri MacDonald and Erinn Gulbrandsen. Freshman Laura Harmon competed in every meet for the Ducks this season. Waiting in the wings are sophomores Carrie Zografos, Annie Davis and freshman Annette Mosey.

The future is much brighter for the Oregon men. Despite failing to qualify for the NCAA meet, the men had a successful season, earning a No. 10 ranking at the high water mark.

The Ducks, led by All-American Jason Hartmann and senior Michael Kasahun, finished well all season, placing second at the Pa-

cific-10 Conference Championships and eighth at the Iowa State Memorial Classic.

Unfortunately, the Ducks stumbled at the Western Regional meet, finishing fourth. That finish would normally have been good enough for an NCAA bid, but instead the selection committee picked 12 other teams that Oregon defeated during the regular season for the national meet instead the Ducks.

"I'm not pleased that we weren't [at the NCAA's]," Head coach Martin Smith said. "The goal of any program is to be at the national championship, but we'll build off what we accomplished this year and move forward."

Hartmann, a sophomore and returning All-American, and Kasahun both qualified to the NCAA meets as individuals. Hartmann placed 35th, while Kasahun was 65th.

"This year, our team was unique and the highlight was our second-place Pac-10 finish," Smith said. "Every competition, we ran steady and improved throughout the season, and there are things to be proud of."

With five of the top-seven runners returning for Oregon, the best is yet to come. Not only has Smith landed a top recruit in South Eugene High School's Erik Heinonen — Son of Oregon women's coach Tom Heinonen — but he will have five other freshmen returning as true freshmen next season.

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