

Smith

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about itself after acquiring the arms of Mike Hampton and Denny Neagle. Unfortunately for the Rockies, though, the thin air of Coors Field will provide its usual damage and Hampton and Neagle could suffer the same fate as ex-Rockie Darryl Kile. The Giants will repeat in this division, and finish ahead of the big-spending Dodgers, who threw a combined \$77.5 million at pitchers Darren Dreifort and Andy Ashby. San Diego won't be last in future Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn's potential final season, as new Arizona manager Bob Brenly will discover that actually managing from the dugout is a whole new ball game than doing it from behind the cameras of Fox Sports Net.

Fearless prediction: Kevin Brown goes on the 60-day DL and forces the Dodgers to eat up his oversized contract for the year.

NL East: John Smoltz's elbow surgery will have an effect, but not enough to prevent Atlanta from capturing this division for the millionth time. Tom Glavine and Greg Maddux will do just fine and look for a strong year from hurler John Burkett. The Mets will miss Hampton, but will still finish second ahead of Florida, Montreal and Philadelphia.

Fearless prediction: Montreal's Vladimir Guerrero will be above .400 in late August.

NL Central: Kobe Bryant may crave a Big Mac in his commercials, but the real Big Mac is craving something more delicious: a World Series title. Mr. Mark McGwire might get just that this season as the Cardinals bolstered their pitching staff with the addition of Dustin Hermanson, who joins Andy Benes and Kile. Ken Griffey, Jr. will have an improved sophomore campaign with the Reds, but it won't be enough to

catch St. Louis.

Fearless prediction: Chicago will lose 100 games, but will still draw sold-out crowds.

AL West: A-Rod will have a good year with Texas. Seattle will have a bad year without A-Rod. Oakland will win the division.

The A's lost sweet swinging Ben Grieve, Randy Velarde and Matt Stairs, but they picked up leadoff hitter Johnny Damon, who last year with the Royals led the A.L. in stolen bases (46) and runs scored (136). Texas will finish second solely on its offense, which will be helped by the addition of Andres Galarrraga, Ken Caminiti and Alex Rodriguez. The Mariners will get by thanks to a solid rotation of Aaron Sele, Jamie Moyer, Freddy Garcia and John Halama, but unless hyped Japanese sensation Ichiro Suzuki is God's cousin, the offense will struggle.

Fearless prediction: A-Rod will get tired of hearing the number 252, as in how many million he will get paid over the next 10 years.

AL East: A rotation that includes Roger Clemens, Andy Pettitte and Orlando "El Duque" Hernandez is lethal. A rotation that includes those three along with free-agent addition Mike Mussina is downright scary. Sorry Boston, but New York just has too many firearms to topple. The Red Sox will finish second and snag a wild card berth despite having Nomar Garciaparra on the DL to open the season. Toronto will wish it still had David Wells and his 20 wins, but will take third behind the bat of Carlos Delgado and his 40-plus dingers.

Fearless prediction: Tampa Bay's Ben Grieve will lead the American League in batting average.

AL Central: One of the best, but least talked about offseason acquisitions was Cleveland's signing of

two-time MVP Juan Gonzalez. Gonzalez badly needed a change of scenery from Detroit and will help absorb the loss of Manny Ramirez to Boston. Cleveland will win the division in the tightest race of the year over Chicago. The White Sox will contend thanks to the arm of Wells and the resurgence of Frank Thomas. The Royals, Twins and Tigers will then have a tight race of their own to try to avoid the cellar.

Fearless prediction: Wells throws another perfect game against Minnesota and then repeats his celebration from his first such performance and drinks 27 beers for each out.

NL Playoffs: Atlanta over wild card Cincinnati. St. Louis over San Francisco.

St. Louis over Atlanta in six games.

AL Playoffs: New York over Cleveland. Oakland over wild card Boston.

New York over Oakland in five games.

World Series: Finally, the Yankees crack under pressure and the Cardinals capture the ultimate prize in game seven at Yankee Stadium. McGwire will garner the headlines, but center fielder Jim Edmonds will be the series MVP after three home runs and three sensational diving catches.

So, there you have it. October will assuredly provide an exciting month of baseball, but as for myself, I'm looking forward to April, May, June, July, August and September.

Now, if you don't mind, I have some chicken noodle soup to slurp, some Vitamin C to take and plenty of baseball to watch.

And really, who needs to go to class on the first day of the term anyway?

Jeff Smith is the sports editor of the Emerald. He can be reached at Smittside@aol.com

Sports briefs

Football opens spring practice

It's that time again. The Oregon football team's off-season is over as the Ducks hit the practice field today for the opening of spring workouts.

Oregon has lofty goals for the 2001-02 season after finishing last season as the seventh ranked team in the country.

The Pacific-10 Conference co-champions must replace seven starters from defense, but return a strong nucleus from its prolific offense.

"We lost some key people," head coach Mike Bellotti said. "We need to create opportunities to discover who are going to be players [on defense], especially at the linebacker positions. We have to identify them and make them better."

Monday will be the first of 15 practices for the Ducks in April, all leading up to the annual Spring Game on April 28.

Ducks place 3rd at own tourney

The Oregon men's golf team made its lone home appearance of the season a good one, placing third at the Duck Invitational on March 27.

Seventeen teams took to the Eugene Country Club greens, fighting through constant rain.

No. 41-ranked San Diego State edged No. 37 Washington on the final hole for the tournament win. UC-Santa Barbara's John Wood captured medalist honors, finishing six under par.

Oregon finished nine strokes behind San Diego State while edging Arizona State for third.

"The conditions with the weather were certainly tough out there," Oregon head coach Steve Nosler said. "But it's not like it was any better for Washington or San Diego State. Third is a lot better than fourth and we certainly competed and gave a good effort out there."

The No. 32-ranked Ducks were led by junior Aaron Byers, who shot a personal best 66 (3-under) in the first round and ended the tournament tied for third.

Sophomore John Ellis also finished in the top-20, shooting a 220 in a tie for 16th place.

Oregon's "B" team finished 13th, shooting a 908 on the final day.

Oregon headed to Western Intercollegiate

The men's golf team heads to Santa Cruz, Calif. today for the 55th Western Intercollegiate, the oldest golf tournament west of the Mississippi.

The No. 32 Ducks are the second-highest ranked squad entered, right behind Stanford at No. 31.

"You look at the trophy of the Western Intercollegiate and it's a who's who of golf," Nosler said. "There's probably 25 or 30 Ryder Cup players who have won this tournament. It is as demanding a golf course as we will play."

Freshman Mike Sica makes his varsity debut and joins Byers, Ellis, Matt Genovese and Chris Carnahan as starters.

The two-day tournament at the Pasatiempo Country Club will feature 18 teams.

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4:00-4:30					
5:00-5:30	Body Sculpt Jamie	Intermed. Step Debbie	Body Sculpt Jamie	Intermed. Step Wendy	
6:00-6:30	Intermed. Step Rorey	Kickbox Aerobics Debbie	Intermed. Step Jamie	Kick Box Aerobics Wendy	

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