

Softball coach Rick Gamez, arguing a call earlier this season at Howe Field, hopes to help his team end a nine-game losing skid today. Jon House Emerald

UO looks to end tough spell

■ The Oregon softball squad faces non-conference foe Loyola Marymount today, then No. 2 UCLA on Friday

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

With just two weeks remaining on the schedule, the season cannot end soon enough for the Oregon softball team.



Scarred by injuries — both physical and emotional — the Ducks (25-33 overall, 1-14 Pacific-10 Conference) have dropped nine straight games heading into today's non-conference matchup against Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles.

The brutal Pac-10 schedule, which has all of Oregon's conference opponents ranked in the top-15 nationally, has taken its toll on head coach Rick Gamez's team, and even the opportunity to pick up a much-needed win against a non-conference foe appears to mean little to the team at this point.

"Of course we're frustrated," sophomore pitcher/outfielder Lisa

Wangler said. "[Non-conference games] don't count for NCAA selection, and we've been so busy, that we were hoping to get it canceled.

"But I just look at it as a chance to have some fun and try not to be so stressed."

Following today's 2 p.m. contest with Loyola Marymount, the Ducks will stay in town to face No. 2 UCLA Friday. The team will then hop on a plane for two games in Seattle against Washington on Saturday and Sunday.

Gamez has led the Ducks to three straight NCAA tournaments, but the chances of making a last second run are only getting slimmer.

"I can't find an explanation," Wangler said. "We have the potential to compete against all of these teams, but for some reason we don't."

Stealin' the show

Wangler is first in the Pac-10 in plate appearances and third in hits. In her first season with the Ducks, the transfer from Mesa, Ariz., is batting .373 in the leadoff spot. She is also fifth in the Pac-10 with 16 steals.

Defensive woes

As a team, the Ducks have had

more fielding chances than any other team in the Pac-10. Fittingly, the Ducks also have the most errors. In 1,751 chances, Oregon has committed 85 errors this season.

The Ducks, however, are second in the league with 19 double plays turned.

Too tough

Except for Oregon, all seven Pac-10 teams are among the nation's best. In this week's National Fast-pitch Coaches Association/USA Today poll, Arizona tops the chart at No. 1 while UCLA is No. 2, Stanford is No. 3 and California No. 5. To round out the list, Arizona State comes in at No. 11, Washington at No. 12 and Oregon State is 14th.

Oregon fell out of the polls on March 16.

Too tough, part deux

Behind Arizona's success in recent years is senior pitcher Becky Lemke, who broke the Wildcats' career strikeout record against the Ducks Sunday. Lemke has 168 strikeouts this season and 880 in her career.

She also became just the sixth pitcher in Pac-10 history — and the fourth Wildcat — to tally 100 wins. Lemke is an impressive 100-18 with a 1.12 ERA in her career.

Triple-A Portland gains first win

By Landon Hall
The Associated Press

PORTLAND — Adam Riggs hit a two-run homer, and the Portland Beavers earned their first victory at newly renovated PGE Park by defeating the Fresno Grizzlies 3-0 on Wednesday night.

Wascar Serrano pitched seven shutout innings for Portland, which had lost three straight, including the first two in the series.

Ryan Radmanovich added a solo homer in the sixth for the Beavers (12-15), who hadn't won a game in Portland since the 1993 season, after which the franchise moved to Salt Lake City. The new Beavers relocated from Albuquerque and played their first eight "home" games in Pasco, Wash.

"It's nice to get the first one," Portland manager Rick Sweet said. "With all the hoopla, you kind of get that out of the way and get some normalcy in here."

Serrano (2-1), a 22-year-old righthander from the Dominican Republic, gave up four hits.

Fresno starter Ryan Vogelsong (1-3) lost his second straight start for the Grizzlies (10-14). He allowed only three hits in six innings, but all were costly.

The Beavers took a 2-0 lead in the bottom of the third when Serrano led off the inning with a single and Riggs followed with a shot to left that bounced off the cement wall about 12 feet above the fence.

"I feel better that we won the game," Riggs said. "We're just a little inconsistent. We've got a good team, and we know that."

Riggs leads the Beavers in home runs (7) and RBIs (19).

Serrano got out of a bases-loaded jam in the fifth when Dante Powell hit into a double play.

David Lundquist pitched a hitless ninth to get his first save of the season.

With the best weather of the homestand so far, the game drew a crowd of 4,305, better than Tuesday night's 3,401 but far below the opening-night turnout of 18,616.



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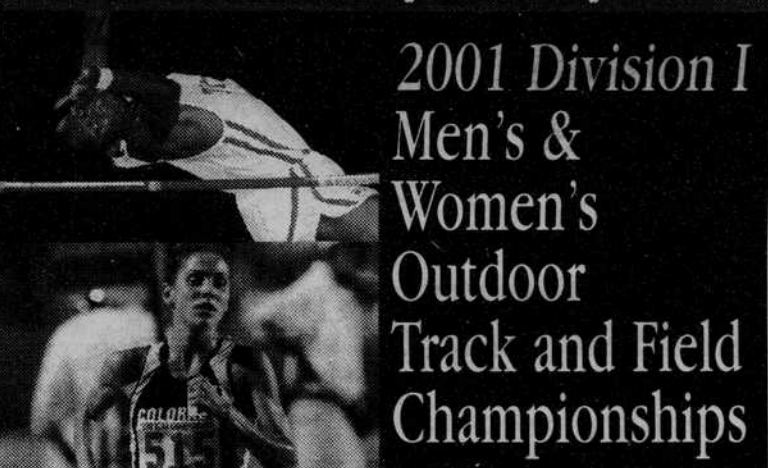
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