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UO excited about regionals

■ Oregon heads to today's NCAA regional competition knowing the course well

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

There have been ups, downs and in-betweens.

And now, the No. 22 Oregon men's golf team is hoping to close out its season on a high note as it enters today's NCAA West Regional tournament.

The Ducks will be one of 27 teams competing at the Trysting Tree Golf Course in Corvallis in the three-day competition. The ultimate goal for all schools involved is to finish in the top-10 and thus move on to the prestigious NCAA Championships on May 30-June 2 in Durham, N.C.

If Oregon, who is the West's fifth seed, doesn't secure a top-10 finish, then its season will be done. But thoughts of not advancing aren't even creeping into the players' minds. In fact, sophomore John Ellis insists that the Ducks' goal is to win it all this week.

"We're not going in with the attitude to just take top-10; that's not right," Ellis said. "When we tee it up Thursday morning, all we should be trying to go after is first place."

Oregon head coach Steve Nosler is finishing up his ninth year as coach, and this will be the sixth time in that span that he has led the Ducks to the NCAA West Regional. He also guided Oregon to back-to-back NAAs in 1998 and '99, and feels this year's team ranks right up there with those teams.

"We have a tremendous opportunity here to go on and play at nationals," Nosler said.

"None of these guys have any idea what an honor and thrill it is to play at the NCAA Championships. That was the goal at the beginning of the season, and we have the ability to achieve that goal right within our grasp."

One of the advantages the Ducks will have in the regional is that it takes place on a course with which they are already familiar. Oregon competed on the Trysting Tree course in its first tournament of the year, the Sept. 11-12 Northwest Classic. In that competition, Oregon sophomore Chris Carnahan captured the first individual crown of his career.

Carnahan and junior teammate Aaron Byers know the Corvallis course inside and out, as they are

both Albany natives and have played there many times.

"I've had a lot of good rounds there, and hopefully, the home course advantage will pay off," Byers said.

The Northwest Classic, though, was played way back in September, and as Nosler is quick to point out, "the course is playing nothing like it did when we were here in the fall."

"The tees are in the same place, and the greens are in the same place, but what you have in between is entirely different," Nosler said. "Now, you better be hitting the fairway because the rough is such where a ball hit in there is kind of like a lost ball."

"The rough is so severe. You simply cannot play from the rough."

The five probable starters for the Ducks that will try to conquer the challenging 6,885-yard, par-70 course include Ellis, Genovese, Carnahan, Byers and junior Brandon Harden.

There will be plenty of top-notch competition from the field, which includes 10 teams in the top-25. Among those ranked teams are Pacific-10 Conference rivals No. 6 Southern California, No. 14 Arizona, No. 24 Washington and No. 4 Arizona State. The Sun Devils are led by Eugene native Jeff Quinney, who won the 2000 U.S. Amateur and played in this year's Masters.

"The field is very, very tough," Nosler said. "It's going to be a shootout."



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Sports brief

Philadelphia takes series lead over Toronto

PHILADELPHIA — Allen Iverson stared directly into Vince Carter's eyes, seemingly toying with him. He faked to his left, then to the right, continued to dribble, shuffled back and nailed a 3-pointer over Carter's outstretched arm.

It was that easy for Iverson on Wednesday night. The NBA's Most Valuable Player scored 52 points,

including 29 in the first half, as the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Toronto Raptors 121-88 to take a 3-2 lead in the Eastern Conference semifinals series.

"To me, [the basket] looked like an ocean," said Iverson, who sprained his left thumb during the game. X-rays on the thumb were negative.

Game 6 of the best-of-seven series is Friday night in Toronto.

Carter scored 16 points and Antonio Davis added 14 for the Raptors, who trail for the first time in the series.

The Associated Press

2001

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