

Oregon Daily Emerald

SPORTS

Sports Editor:
Adam Jude
adamjude@dailyemerald.com
Assistant Sports Editor:
Jeff Smith
jeffsmith@dailyemerald.com

Best Bet

MLB Playoffs:

Houston at Atlanta, Game 3

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New look Oregon hoopsters anxious to begin

■ The Oregon men are preaching defense as they prepare for a new season in which they've added four new post players to help clog the middle

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

There were smiles, high-fives and laughter all over the new McArthur Court floor Thursday as the 2001-02 version of the Oregon men's basketball team met with the media for the first time.

And in addition to the different floor — which has replaced the Duck at center court with an "O" similar to the one at Autzen Stadium — Oregon is promising a much different team than the one that went 5-13 in the Pacific-10 Conference last season.

Namely, the Ducks are guaranteeing to be tougher on defense, which they will begin working on Saturday in the team's first practice. Think their defensive efforts from a season ago haven't been on their minds all summer? Take a listen.

From senior guard Freddie Jones: "We were one of the worst defensive teams in the Pac-10 last season."

From fellow senior guard Ben Lindquist: "Our defense was pretty bad last year during that nightmare season when everything sort

of snowballed on us."

And from head coach Ernie Kent: "It was definitely the worst defensive team that I've coached."

Which makes it easy to see why Kent is so excited about the addition of Fred Litzenger as an assistant coach. Litzenger spent the past six seasons as a defensive specialist with the Oregon women's basketball team and is chomping at the bit to get started with the men's team.

"I've been waiting for this day to come all summer," said Litzenger, who's in his 35th year of coaching, including being a men's assistant with Kent for two seasons at Colorado State in the late '80s. "I'm so excited. I've watched all their tapes from last season and could see the areas they needed to improve in. They were so close, yet so far."

Litzenger will have some big bodies to work with as the Ducks' roster boasts seven players standing at 6 feet, 8 inches or taller. In addition to returnees Chris Christoffersen (7-3), Mark Michaelis (6-10) and Jay Anderson (6-9), Kent has brought in four players who help make the Ducks one of the biggest teams in the country.

Of the four, junior college transfers Robert Johnson (6-8) and Brian Helquist (6-9) are expected to contribute immediately with freshmen Matt Short (7-0) and Ian Crosswhite (6-11) being allowed to come at their own pace.

"It's going to be a lot of fun this year and I just

Turn to **Women's**, page 6A

■ After a season where turmoil surrounded the Oregon women, 2001-02 is shaping up to be a success

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

Fans who trek to McArthur Court this season will see a practically brand new women's basketball squad.

Gone is eight-year head coach Jody Runge. Jenny Mowe, Angelina Wolvert, Lindsey Dion and Brianne Meharry have all departed as well.

Now, former Duck standout Bev Smith enters as the team's new head coach. After almost 20 years away from the Oregon program, she takes over for the much maligned Runge.

But she will have help in her first year at the helm.

Junior Shaquala Williams returns after redshirting last season due to a torn ACL, suffered in a September 2000 pick-up game. The guard earned Pacific-10 Conference Freshman of the Year honors in 1998-99, and has been named as a third-team preseason All-American by the Women's Basketball News Service for the upcoming season.

Williams is joined this season by six freshmen, including high school standout Catherria Turner. Turner, a guard from Tuc-

son, Ariz., averaged 29 points, 11 rebounds and 10 steals a game last season for Amphitheatre High School.

"The six new freshmen have done an unbelievable job of revitalizing our returning players," Smith said. "They keep them on their feet. They're very athletic and playing into what we think our strengths will be this year."

Unlike years past, this year's Duck squad will not be the biggest, or most dominating team on the floor. Mowe, who was a giant presence inside, has graduated on to the WNBA, leaving a hole in the middle. However, this year's team will be fast and will play an up-tempo game.

"We're not going to be the tallest team in the league, but we're going to have to play very tall and very big," Smith said. "We're going to be a small and quick team. That is not going to have to be our problem, but the opposing team's problem."

The key to the Ducks' new explosive offense will be Williams and senior Jamie Craighead. Oregon has six returning guards, including Craighead, who set a school record with 81 three-pointers last season.

"I think, in the past, we had to go with our strengths," Williams said. "We were big and we were strong, and so we had to utilize our inside players. But now we're quick and fast and so we're going to have to utilize that athleticism and so just getting up and down the court, running and gunning, is something

Turn to **Men's**, page 6A

UO soccer hoping offense can help knock off tough Bay Area foes

■ Two ranked Pac-10 rivals visit Eugene this weekend and the upset-minded Ducks are ready for the challenge

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

History, rankings and records will all go against the Oregon soccer team as the Ducks take on No. 17 California and No. 9 Stanford at Papé Field this weekend.

So what will Oregon have in its favor? Oregon head coach Bill Steffen said his Ducks will be confident, despite the avalanche of negative factors.

"We feel like we can beat anybody in the country," Steffen said. "I think we have to feel like that."

The Ducks have been unsuccessful against the northern California teams in the past. Oregon is a combined 0-8 against Cal and Stanford, and has scored only once against the teams, while being scored upon 21 times.

Oregon has had more success against Cal than Stanford. Three seasons ago, the Ducks traveled to Berkeley and took the Golden Bears to over-

time, before losing 2-1.

This season, the Bay Area teams are as dominant as ever. Stanford has lost only once, to sixth-ranked Santa Clara. California was 7-1 heading into last week, before the Bears dropped a match to No. 14 St. Mary's and tied with San Francisco. Cal's only previous loss was to No. 10 Texas A&M.

Both teams enter Pacific-10 Conference play with high hopes for trips to the NCAA Tournament, where both teams went last season. Both teams were knocked off in the second round of the tournament.

Oregon is still searching for its first NCAA Tournament berth. With a 6-2-1 record heading into Pac-10 play, the Ducks will most likely need four conference victories — a feat never before accomplished by the Ducks — to make this season's NCAA Tournament.

Oregon has improved this season with speed and an offensive onslaught. After being outscored 64-21 and outshot 397-261 last season, the Ducks have turned the offensive tables on their opponents this season. Ore-

Turn to **Soccer**, page 6A



Adam Amato Emerald
Oregon senior forward Crystal David (17) will help lead the Duck offensive attack this weekend when her team hosts 17th-ranked California on Friday and ninth-ranked Stanford on Sunday. David and the Ducks will be looking to grab an early lead in the always-competitive Pacific-10 Conference.

Pre-NCAAs to provide runners with challenging course, opponents

■ Furman University is the host to the Pre-NCAA Invitational Meet where the Ducks will face top national competition

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

If the Oregon runners want to go to the NCAA cross country championships, it's almost imperative for them to compete well this weekend at the Pre-Nationals in Greenville, S.C.

"We've got to perform a lot better

at Pre-Nationals, and if we don't, then it's a matter of doing all we can in the last two weeks of the season," women's head coach Tom Heinonen said.

Held at the Furman University cross country course, the Pre-NCAAs will feature teams from around the country, including a majority of the top-25 ranked teams on both the men's and women's sides.

The teams will preview the course that will also host the NCAA Championships, and to try to compile as many head-to-head wins

against other potential NCAA qualifiers, which will be beneficial when the at-large bids for the championships are given out.

The Pre-Nationals features so many teams that the field will be broken up into two evenly divided races. There will also be a third race on the same course that day, the Furman Invitational, which will involve many high school runners and other collegiate teams.

The Duck women will be running first in the NCAA Pre-Meet races against No. 1 Colorado and nine other schools in the top-25.

There will be a total of 37 teams joining Oregon at the 10:45 a.m. start.

The No. 18 Oregon men will run at 11:55 a.m. against 36 other teams, eight of which are ranked in the top-25, including No. 2 Stanford.

Similar to the last large race in which the Oregon runners ran, Minnesota's Roy Griak Invitational, the course will be flooded with participants.

"It's going to be constricted so our athletes need to avoid the Minnesota pitfall, which was not get-

ting out fast enough and trying to run through the field," Heinonen said. "They are simply going to have to get out faster and get ahead of more people to start. We've been training with that in mind for the last 10 days."

Though redshirt sophomore Tara Struyk's injured leg has been progressing, she will take another weekend off and sit out of Saturday's race. She has been able to do a couple of short runs, but Heinonen feels it is too risky to have her run in the competition even though the Ducks could certainly use her help.