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Best Bet
N.Y. Giants at Minnesota,
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Ducks can do no worse than Jan. 1 Fiesta Bowl

■ Oregon becomes the first Pac-10 team to win back-to-back conference crowns since Washington did it from 1990-92

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

By doing absolutely nothing Saturday, Oregon was assured the opportunity to finish its season in 2002.

Thanks to Washington's 26-14 victory over Washington State, the sixth-ranked Ducks clinched at least a berth in the Jan. 1 Fiesta Bowl in Tempe, Ariz., which is where this

season's Pacific-10 Conference champion will go.

Even if Oregon (6-1 Pac-10) should lose to Oregon State on Dec. 1, the Ducks would finish in a tie for first with Washington (6-2), Washington State (6-2) and Stanford (6-2), which all finished league play Saturday. Oregon would still get the Fiesta Bowl berth since it has the four-way tiebreaker advantage of not having been to the Rose Bowl the longest.

"We know we're at least going to the Fiesta Bowl, and that's awesome," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "When people tell you before the season that you're the

odds-on favorite to win the conference championship, certainly there's a sense of pride and a sense of, 'OK, now we have to live up to that.' And I think we have lived up to that."

Also, there remains the possibility of Oregon sneaking into the Jan. 3 Rose Bowl, but the Ducks didn't receive much help Saturday with Florida, Tennessee and Miami all winning. The Ducks would need to finish first or second in the final Bowl Championship Series rankings, where they currently are fourth with the latest standings to be released today.

The Ducks expressed happiness in clinching the school's first New

Year's Day bowl berth since the 1996 Cotton Bowl and to have become the first Oregon team to share — at least — a Pac-10 title in consecutive years.

Last season, Oregon's Civil War loss at Oregon State kept the Ducks out of the Rose Bowl and forced them to be co-champions with the Beavers and the Huskies.

"Yeah, we were tri-champions or whatever you want to call it, but we had an empty feeling inside," tight end Justin Peelle said.

The feeling Saturday wasn't one of jubilation. For Oregon, the time to celebrate will come after the Civil

War, if the team beats the Beavers to claim sole possession of the crown.

"No, not yet," said linebacker Kevin Mitchell in response to whether it felt like Oregon had won the Pac-10. "We've got one more game. And for us to come out solo champs will be an even greater thing than what we've accomplished so far."

Student tickets for the Dec. 1 Ducks-Beavers game at Autzen Stadium are available at 9 a.m. today.

Jeff Smith is the assistant sports editor for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at jeffsmith@dailymerald.com.

Ducks rebound to win against Miami of Ohio

■ With an 83-65 win over Miami of Ohio, the women's basketball team improves to 1-1 on the year

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

Now that's more like it.

A day after losing its first home opener in 25 years, the Oregon women's basketball team rebounded — literally — to defeat Miami of Ohio 83-65 in front of 3,846 fans at McArthur Court on Sunday.

In a 75-57 loss to Wisconsin-Green Bay on Saturday, the Ducks (1-1 overall) were oversized in the paint and it showed in the final stats, where Oregon was outrebounded 38-26. On Sunday, though, three Ducks tallied five rebounds each en route to a 37-31 advantage on the boards.

"It was better, but it can be better," first-year head coach Bev Smith said of the rebounding. "We made some good adjustments from (Saturday) ... but there are a million things we need to focus on."

The Ducks shot just 1-of-16 from three-point land Saturday, but were 7-of-19 against the Redhawks on Sunday. After missing all seven of her shots Saturday, senior guard Jamie Craighead, the team's top returning scorer from last season, was 4-for-4 on threes Sunday and scored 16 points.

"We can't live and die on (three pointers), but it's hard for our team not to shoot when we have such great shooters," Smith said.

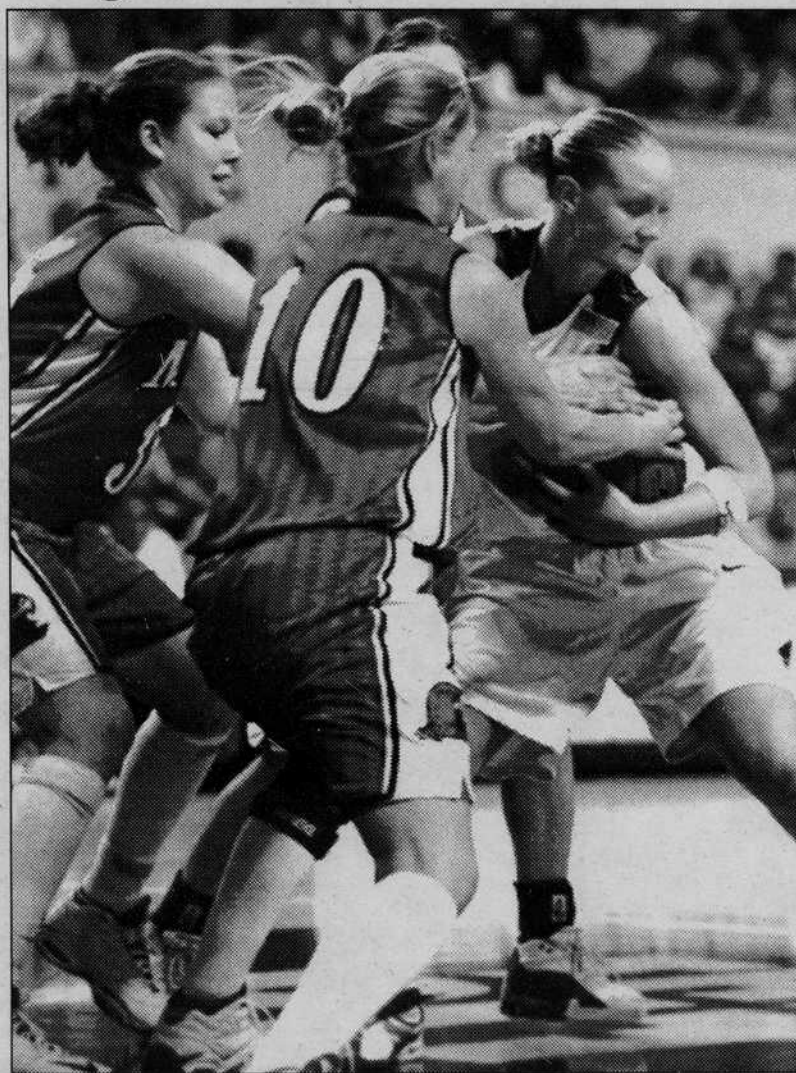
Junior guard Shaquala Williams scored 16 points, with the team shooting 50 percent from the floor against Miami.

"Defensively, we were all on the same page (Sunday) and we did a good job of making them take tough shots," Williams said. "We weren't going at 150 miles per hour, which is what it felt like (Saturday)."

Oregon led the Redhawks 45-41 at the half, but a three-pointer by Miami's Heather Cusick cut the lead to one. In the next 16 minutes, though, Miami would hit just four field goals, giving way to a 24-point Oregon lead on a Kedzie Gunderson jumper with 4:43 to play.

"It's good to get a win," Williams said, "but it's nicer that we're together with a sense of cohesiveness."

In a game that Williams described as "ugly," the Ducks had 25 turnovers and gave up 20 offensive rebounds to Wisconsin-



Adam Amato Emerald

Oregon guard Jamie Craighead battles for the ball as Miami of Ohio opponents attempt to wrestle it away during Sunday's 83-65 Ducks victory at McArthur Court in front of 3,846 fans.

Turn to Women's, page 6

UO harriers set for run at NCAA title

■ The men's cross country team travels to Greenville, S.C., to compete in the NCAA Championships

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

It all comes down to one last race.

The No. 14 Oregon men's cross country team has fought its way into the NCAA Championships in Greenville, S.C., and today the Ducks will run for the national crown.

This year's invitation marks the Ducks' 27th appearance in the NCAAs since 1963 and their second trip under third year head coach Martin Smith, who is looking forward to the challenge of the national competition.

"One of the most important things is that we're not just excited to be there, but try to run well and finish as high as we're capable of," Smith said.

The last time the Ducks won the national championship was in 1977, but they have come close in other years, with 14 top-10 finishes since then, including three runner-up titles. In its last NCAA Championship meet in 1999, Oregon placed sixth.

Two-time All-American junior Jason Hartmann, who finished 35th last year (he received an individual invitation to the national race by finishing second at the Western Regionals) and 37th in 1999, is the only Duck harrier who has run in the Championship meet.

The other Oregon runners who will accompany Hartmann to the Furman University

Turn to Cross country, page 6

Blowout times three: Ducks dominate America's Youth Classic

■ The Oregon men's basketball team improves to 3-0 on the season with three victories at its own tournament

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

The opponents changed. The results did not.

Oregon dominated its own America's Youth Classic tournament with three blowout wins over the weekend, finishing with a 97-67 victory over Long Beach State on Saturday night. The Ducks also beat Alabama State by 40 points on Thursday and Western Michigan

by 43 points on Friday.

"It was good to fight through our fatigue and get three wins in three days," Oregon sophomore point guard Luke Ridnour said.

The Ducks capped their tournament with the 30-point blowout of the LBSU 49ers on Saturday night. The game was off to a sloppy start until a reverse, two-handed backhand alley-oop dunk by Oregon senior guard Freddie Jones got the crowd, and the Ducks, into the contest. That dunk put Oregon up 7-0, and the Ducks would increase their lead to as many as 21 points in the first half.

Saturday's game was dominated by the Ducks and a team in black

and white pinstripes — the officials. Two players fouled out as the referees called 24 total fouls in the first half and 37 in the game.

Still, the Ducks managed to put together a solid effort on both sides of the floor and improved to 3-0 on the season. Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said he was impressed with his team's effort during the weekend.

"The fans will look at it as three blowout wins," Kent said. "We see it as our system totally and completely working."

Jones was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player for his gravity-defying dunks and tough defense. Jones had his best night statistically

against Long Beach State, scoring 16 points and adding three steals in 26 minutes of floor time. With the steals, Jones moved into fourth all-time at Oregon in that category.

"This really belongs to Luke (Ridnour) and all the other guys who came out here and helped us get three wins," Jones said of the honor.

Junior forward Robert Johnson was the only other Duck to be named to the five-player all-tournament team. Johnson was a rebound vacuum for Oregon over the weekend and collected a total of 25 boards in the three games. Long Beach State's James Williams, Alabama State's Joey Ball and Western

Michigan's Steve Reynolds were also named to the team.

As the Ducks prepare to face Rick Pitino's Louisville Cardinals at the Papé Jam in Portland next weekend, the team members said they will take a few lessons from the tournament.

"I think we learned that we just need to come out and play our game and we'll win," Jones said. "We don't want to be an up-and-down team."

Oregon will face Louisville at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Rose Garden in Portland.

Peter Hockaday is a sport reporter. He can be reached at peterhockaday@dailymerald.com.