

The Pit's the place

McArthur Court is everything that is right about college sports.

The place has no luxury boxes, caters to the students, and you can't find a drop of alcohol in the entire place. (Of course, serving alcoholic beverages is banned by the NCAA, but it's kind of ironic considering that "Budweiser" advertisements adorn the third-level seating area.)

As the venerable 75-year-old Mac Court hosts its first, and likely its last, Pacific-10 Conference Tournament this weekend, the specter of a newer, more modern arena has reared its ugly head. I mean, isn't it kind of a neat thing to say that Oregon has one of the most revered gymnasiums and playing facilities in all of the college world?

It's definitely been a treat to be able to see some great basketball played at the Pit since I arrived at the University last year.

But discussing a new building is kind of an inevitable thing in this day and age. This is something that, in a perfect world, no one wants to talk about. Corporate sponsorships and luxury boxes are the name of the game today, and undoubtedly will become the sole focus of a new arena, whether those discussions are a year or 20 years from now.

And that's a shame. The new buildings across the country sparkle like a diamond in sunlight, but there really is no personality to them. Some of the greatest places to watch a game — like Stanford's Maples Pavilion or Duke's Cameron Indoor Stadium — are neither the biggest nor the most plush. But, boy, can they pack the fans in.

The Pit is definitely one of those buildings. The players love standing on the Oregon "O" at half-court, and the fans, well, let's just say, they are some of the most intense on the West Coast. What other school can lay claim to a nickname like the "Pit Crew," much less take pride in it?

So now there is discussion about a new building that would seat 16,000. Of course, with a capacity like that, the place would be a multi-purpose facility and could host more than just basketball.

But 16,000? Is that really necessary? Is there really a need to attract the Britney Spears and 'NSYNCs of the world?

Absolutely not.

And to say that Oregon basketball could continually pack in 16,000 per game is foolish talk. The Pit holds a little more than 9,000

fans and has sold out just six of 16 men's home games this season.

But unlike football, basketball is not of religious stature to the people of Eugene. Sure, when the teams are successful, the fans will come out in droves. But what happens when the Ducks have a down year?



Hank Hager
Behind the dish

The city of Eugene could not support a 16,000 seat arena, but it could support a building, of say, 13,000. That number could be appropriate for the kind of attendance figures the Oregon basketball teams already receive. The women's team, for example, fills more than half of Mac Court during their games, which is tops in the Pac-10. These figures would easily translate into an arena that size.

But whatever is decided, the Oregon Athletic Department needs to make sure that all teams get access to the new building.

University Vice President Dan Williams said Monday that fans will still be able to see "wrestling, volleyball and possibly women's basketball" at McArthur Court if a new building is constructed.

I just have one question to that: Why wouldn't every team that's able to play indoors get the chance to compete at the new facility? Every athlete on campus deserves to get the same treatment as others on campus.

Just because volleyball doesn't attract more than 1,000 fans a match doesn't mean they wouldn't benefit from an improved facility

Of course, something like this would need to be discussed if a new arena is agreed upon, but that kind of talk needs to be dismissed. Each athlete has a right to the best things the University has to offer, and a new stadium would be one of those things.

The day is upon us when the unthinkable has begun to happen. It has been in the back of everyone's mind for quite awhile now, but only recently has the presence of a new facility been discussed.

It's tough, but we're all just going to have to like it.

But whatever happens, remember the 75 years that McArthur Court has given the University. There will never be another place like it.

Sports brief

University to install new field with NeXturf

University students will be the beneficiaries of the decision not to reinstall last year's playing surface into Autzen Stadium when the majority of the facility's renovation is completed this summer.

Instead, the NeXturf synthetic surface, installed in Autzen Stadium for the first time last summer, will be used by the University to aid in the addition of a second artificial surface field on campus for use by the Department of Physical Activity and Recreation Services.

The new turf field, originally planned as part of the construction of the Recreation Center two years ago, was deleted from the project to remain within budget. The field will serve to complement Oregon's lone multi-purpose student recre-

ation field, which is primarily used for the University's intramural sports and recreational programs.

The second artificial surface, which will be located immediately south of the existing recreational field and to the west of Hayward Field, is expected to be completed in time for the beginning of the 2002 fall term.

The Athletic Department's gift will not only include the turf, but the site excavation and preparation for installation as well, with all the costs, including the purchase and installation of the new turf at Autzen Stadium, estimated to be between \$800,000 and \$900,000.

When the synthetic surface was installed at Autzen Stadium last summer, the original intent was to have it removed following the Ducks' final football game Dec. 1 in order to diminish possible damage that could have occurred during the current stadium expansion and ren-

ovation project. It was then to have been permanently reinstalled in time for the 2002 football home opener against Mississippi State on Aug. 31.

The Athletic Department has decided to replace the former surface with FieldTurf, which consists of polyethylene and polypropylene fibers designed to resist extreme temperature and weather conditions.

"Because of our extraordinary football season, we are in a position to offer our turf to the Department of Physical Activities and Recreation Services free of cost, thus enabling intercollegiate athletics to install an alternate product that will be more suitable to our needs," Oregon Athletic Director Bill Moos said. "NeXturf will be ideal for PARS considering the demands on their facilities from intramurals, club sports and general student use."

— from staff and wire reports

Wrestling

continued from page 9

Fresno State on Feb. 8 and No. 25 Oregon State on Feb. 13.

Oregon is not ranked in the Division I Coaches Poll, but Fresno State holds the No. 20 position. The Bulldogs recently defeated No. 13 Arizona State and a strong Cal Poly team. Fresno State's senior leader, Stephen Abas (125 pounds), now holds a school record of 137 victories.

Individually, four Oregon wrestlers are ranked in their weight classes. Heavyweight Eric Webb is ranked No. 20, falling one spot from

last week. No. 17 Brian Watson maintained his ranking in the 141-pound class as did No. 10 Shaun Williams at 125 pounds. Senior Eugene Harris (165 pounds) improved his ranking one slot from last week and now holds the No. 4 position.

Up and down Beavers

In their last dual meet of the season, Oregon State broke Boise State's seven-match winning streak with a 20-11 victory on Feb. 16. This win followed two straight losses to Fresno State and Oregon.

The Beavers' heavyweight wrestler No. 7 Jason Cooley won

his seventh straight match in the win and Oregon State head coach Joe Wells is encouraged with the way his team is wrestling.

"This was a big match for seeding opportunities and for us to vault off of this dual meet win," Wells said. "Boise State had just come off beating Oregon and Fresno State, and we kind of won in fine fashion, so I'm pleased with the win. I'm excited about opportunities for the Pac-10 championships."

E-mail sports reporter Chris Cabot at chriscabot@dailyemerald.com.

Women's

continued from page 9

the best single-season percentage in the Ducks' history.

Finally, at 4.15 assists per game, she ranked sixth in the Pac-10.

Sophomore Cathrine Kraayeveld was fourth in the conference in field goal percentage at .500, and with 7.6 rebounds per game, she ranked sixth in the conference.

Craighead ended her Oregon career by shooting 42 percent from beyond the three-point arc, and was ninth in the Pac-10 with 1.79 steals per game.

Record watch

Craighead, who finished her regular season career with two three-pointers against Washington on Saturday, now has 160 in her ca-

reer. That is good enough to place her second all-time in Oregon history, trailing only Missy Croshaw's 189.

Her 42 percent made this season is also good for fourth all-time, this time trailing Michele Ebele's 1988-89 mark by 5 percent.

At one of the guard positions, Williams has again made her way into the record books. The Portland native is ninth in school history in scoring at 1,335 points. She trails eighth place by 57 points.

Williams scored 471 points this season, including 331 in Pac-10 play. If she keeps up that pace, she will end her Oregon career next season with 1,806 points, good for fourth all-time.

Regular season notes

The Ducks finished 10-8, their ninth straight winning season in

conference play ... Oregon averaged 72.7 points per game, fourth in the Pac-10 ... Three Ducks recorded double-doubles this season, with Kraayeveld earning five ... On Jan. 6 against Arizona, Williams became the only Duck to post more than 30 points in a game with a career-high tying 31... Kraayeveld was the only Duck to be named Pac-10 Player of the Week when she earned the honors on Feb. 18 ... The Ducks led the Pac-10 again in attendance as 4,613 fans on average watched Oregon at McArthur Court. They did not, however, draw in the largest crowd of the season; 6,193 watched Oregon State defeat the Ducks in January, but an earlier Stanford-Tennessee game in Palo Alto, Calif., attracted 7,391 people.

E-mail sports reporter Hank Hager at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

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