

## SPORTS

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**Best Bet**  
L.A. Lakers at Utah  
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# Pac-10 ready to showcase talent in tournament

■ After a 12-year hiatus, the Pac-10 Tournament returns — and the 'dynamite' league is ready to celebrate

By Peter Hockaday  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Watch out. This league is explosive.

Like a runaway train, the Pacific-10 Conference men's basketball teams are collectively heading down the track toward the conference tournament, and many Pac-10 coaches see this as a time to reflect on the sheer madness that was the regular season.

"It's a dynamite league," California head coach Ben Braun said. "Now is a great time to showcase your league and, in a sense, celebrate the league."

Cal will be "celebrating" by playing UCLA on Thursday in the first round of the conference tournament. The matchup is one of many scintillating first-round contests that also include Arizona against Arizona State, USC against Stanford and Oregon against Northwest rival Washington.

The first conference tournament in 12 years should be an exclamation point on a regular season that was highly competitive. Six of the top eight teams in the Pac-10 Tournament finished the regular season separated by only three games.

"The way this conference has played out this year, I wouldn't expect anything but tough competition in the tournament," Arizona coach Lute Olson said.

Those top six teams — Oregon, Cal, USC, Stanford, Arizona and UCLA — should all be headed to the NCAA Tournament, no matter what happens in the conference tournament. But two teams, Arizona State and Washington, will be trying to win it all and earn the conference's automatic bid that goes to the tournament champion.

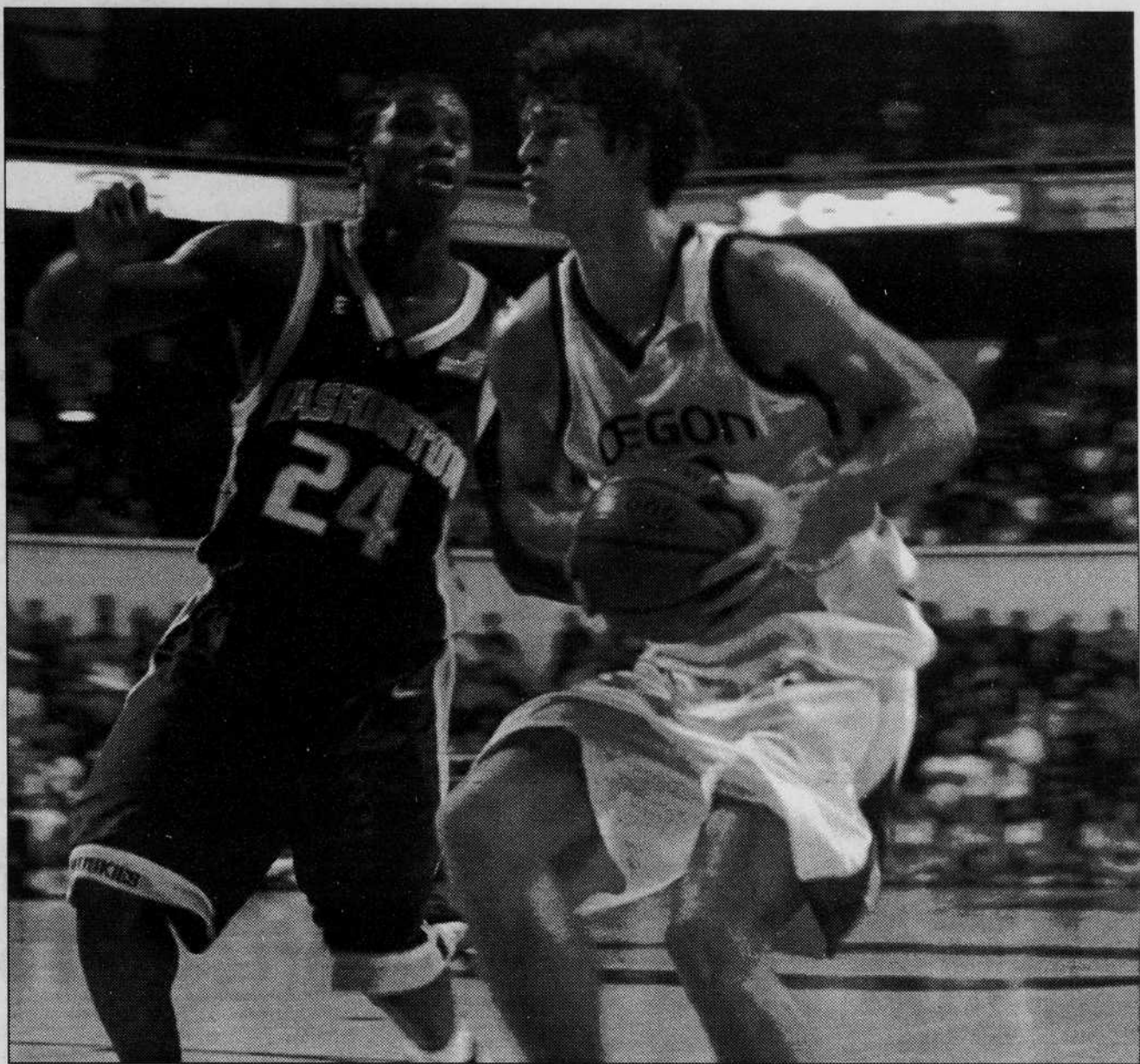
No. 1-seed Oregon plays No. 8 Washington at 1 p.m. Thursday on Fox Sports Net. The Huskies, led by Pac-10 Newcomer of the Year Doug Wrenn, defeated the Ducks in Seattle, 97-92, on Jan. 24 and played well at McArthur Court two weeks ago in a loss.

Arizona State could be the surprise of the weekend. The Sun Devils have beaten Oregon, Arizona and UCLA this season.

"ASU is in a position to win it all," Olson said of his cross-state rivals. "They have the depth where they can go for three straight days."

But don't talk to the Devils about beating the tough Pac-10 field. On its official Web site, the Arizona State athletic

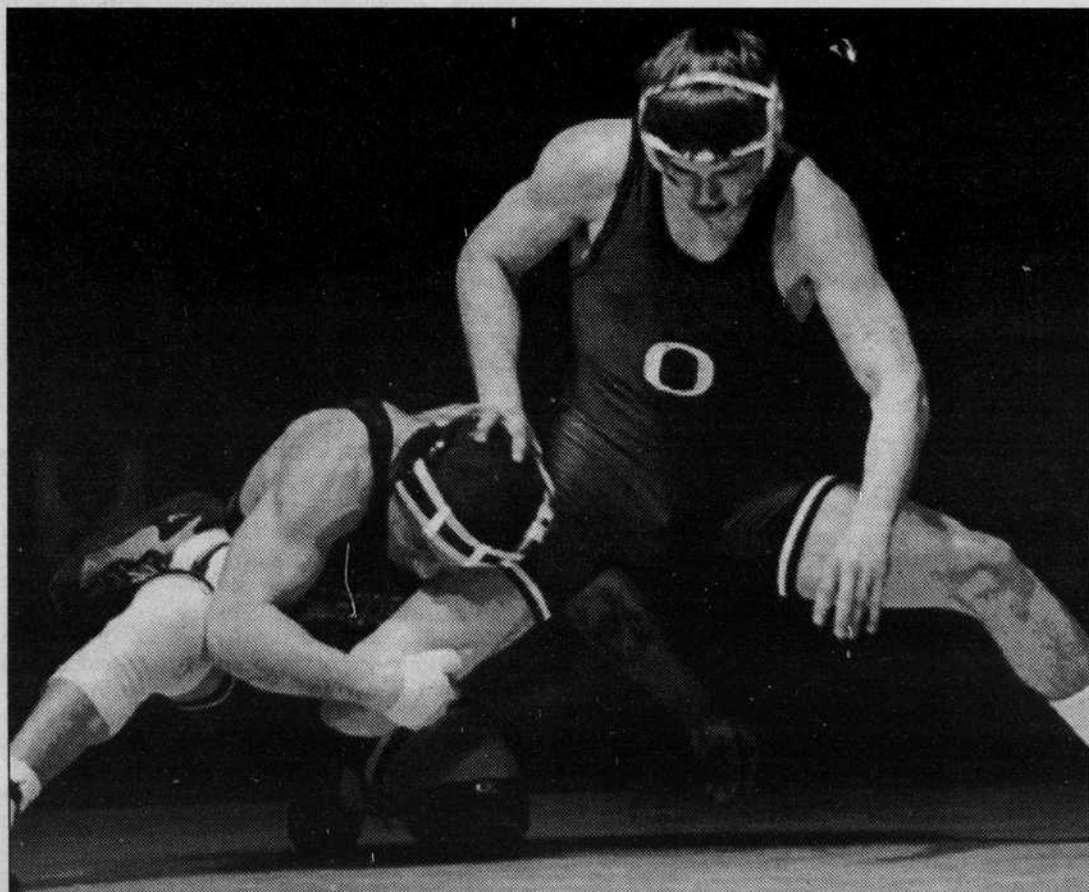
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Jonathan House Emerald

Sophomore forward Luke Jackson and the Ducks will face Washington and Doug Wrenn (24) in the first round of the Pac-10 Tournament on Thursday. Wrenn, the Pac-10 Newcomer of the Year, averaged 29.5 points in two games against Oregon this season.

# Oregon will send eight wrestlers to NCAA championships



Oregon's Jason Harless (right) was one of three Pac-10 wrestlers to receive a wildcard bid to the NCAA Tournament.

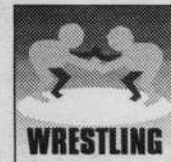
Adam Amato Emerald

■ Eight Oregon athletes earned their way to Albany, N.Y., for the national tournament — the highest number since 1981.

By Chris Cabot  
Oregon Daily Emerald

This will be a bill the Oregon Athletic Department won't mind paying.

Eight members of head coach Chuck Kearney's team have earned invitations to Albany, N.Y., for the NCAA Tournament after their performance at the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament during the past weekend — the most Oregon wrestlers since 1981 that have earned invites to the nationals.



The Oregon wrestling team's three individual champions and second place team finish at the Pac-10 Tournament was the best showing for a Duck squad since 1989.

In addition to Eugene Harris (165 pounds), Tony Overstake (157) and Shaun Williams (125) all winning their respective weight classes, Oregon placed one wrestler in second (Brian Watson), two in third (Shane Webster and Eric Webb), one in fourth (Casey Hunt), one in fifth (Jason Harless) and one in sixth (Jake Leair).

### Wild about the invites

Harless, Oregon's 133-pounder, was one of three Pac-10 wrestlers selected as wild card to compete in the national tournament. Arizona State's Rocky Smart (157) and Boise State's Gabe Vigil (141) also received invitations to Albany.

Smart was seeded No. 1 in the conference tournament

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