

SPORTS

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Best Bet
Pac-10 Men's Tournament:
Oregon vs. Washington
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Ducks face familiar foe in first round of Pac-10

Oregon opens the tourney with the Huskies, who believe they have what it takes to pull off the upset

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

LOS ANGELES — So the topsy-turvy 18-game regular season has come and gone, and the No. 9 Ducks have emerged on top as conference champions.

The Oregon men's basketball team is assured of an NCAA Tournament berth, and it would seem that the Ducks wouldn't have the same moti-

vation for this weekend's league tournament as, say, Washington.

After a 12-year hiatus, the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament returns in a three-day, eight-team format at Los Angeles' Staples Center. The action begins at 1 p.m. today with top-seeded Oregon facing off with eighth-seeded Washington on Fox Sports Net.

But don't try to suggest to

Ernie Kent that his Ducks (22-7 overall, 14-4 Pac-10) will have any less desire to win the tournament title just because they're already assured of a spot in the Big Dance.

"I think when you put all those teams together in one place and those kids are with their peers on the same floor, they're going to want to play, and they're going to want to win that thing," Kent said. "I

don't think anybody will be motivated any less because they're already in the NCAA Tournament."

Surely, though, there will be a fired-up and confident Huskies team that will enter today's game with the Ducks. Washington (11-17, 5-13) held off Oregon State for the tournament's eighth and final spot but hasn't had much success with the other seven teams involved

— except Oregon.

Washington is 1-8 this season against ranked opponents with that lone victory coming on Jan. 24 at home when the Huskies upended the then-No. 19 Ducks, 97-92. In the win, Pac-10 Newcomer of the Year Doug Wrenn scored a career-high 32 points to lift his team to an inspiring victory

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Conference honors Kent as top coach

■ Oregon's Freddie Jones and Luke Ridnour also earn All-Pac-10 honors Wednesday night

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent led his team to the front of the Pacific-10 Conference this season, and he was rewarded as the conference's Coach of the Year Wednesday night.

Duck senior guard Freddie Jones and sophomore point guard Luke Ridnour were named to the 10-member All-Pac-10 Team in the same ceremony. Oregon sophomore forward Luke Jackson received an All-Pac-10 honorable mention.

Jones was considered a candidate for the Pac-10 Player of the Year award, but that honor went instead to Southern California's Sam Clancy. Arizona's Salim Stoudamire, a Portland native, was named the Pac-10 Freshman of the Year.

Kent took last season's 14-14 Oregon team and made it into a 22-7 conference champion this season, leading to his selection as coach of the year. The former Duck player has a 90-56 overall record in five seasons as Oregon's head coach.

The award was the first such honor for Kent, who was also named by the United States Basketball Writers Association as the District IX Coach of the Year on Tuesday. It was the first Pac-10 Coach of the Year honor given to an Oregon coach since Dick Harter received the award in 1977.

Jones earned All-Pac-10 honors for the first time in his career. The senior from Gresham started every game this season, averaging 18.6 points to lead

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Thomas Patterson Emerald

Oregon's Freddie Jones was named to the All-Pac-10 Team for the first time in his career Wednesday night.

Tournament offers taste of Madness

■ The first round of the Pac-10 Tournament boasts several intriguing matchups

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

Arizona coach Lute Olson said it will take depth to win this weekend's Pacific-10 Conference Tournament.

Stanford's Mike Montgomery said the team that can keep its energy will win. Arizona State's Rob Evans said that whichever team avoids injury could have the best shot.

They're all wrong. All it takes is three wins over three days, against some of the most evenly-matched competition in the entire country.

Three wins. Three days.

Whichever team can do that will walk into the NCAA Tournament as the Pac-10's automatic representative.

Four of the eight teams will be eliminated today in first-round action. Two more will be axed in the semifinals Friday.

Here's a rundown of today's games, by start time. All games will be televised on Fox Sports Net.

No. 1 Oregon vs. No. 8 Washington, 1 p.m.

Pac-10 officials couldn't have asked for a better opening-round game between the top and bottom seeds. Washington has a dismal 11-17 season record, 5-13 in the Pac-10. Oregon won its first outright Pac-10 title since 1939 by a full two games and holds a 14-4 conference record.

But one of those four losses came at the hands of the Huskies. Over the past three years, the Ducks and Huskies

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Oregon ready for postseason play, even if it's not the Big Dance

The Ducks are looking for an NCAA bid but are encouraged by the prospects of playing in the WNIT

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Pacific-10 Conference season is over, and with a 17-13 overall record, the Oregon women are on thin ice for the NCAA Tournament.

Last season, the Ducks finished 17-11 after conference play and were awarded with their eighth straight postseason appearance. Oregon is ready to make it nine straight, but not in the tournament it was hoping for.

The Women's National Invitation Tournament, little sister of the Big Dance, annually takes the next best 32

teams after the NCAA version claims its 64. The Ducks would be disappointed to play second fiddle to the real thing, but know the WNIT is a definite possibility and still important.

"It would be very important for our team given they are very young," head coach Bev Smith said. "It would be a good experience."

However, the Ducks are still holding out hope for the NCAA Tournament selection committee to include them when the field of 64 is announced Sunday.

"I still think we are a good team," sophomore Cathrine Kraayeveld said. "I

think that (the selection committee) knows that. We can compete with other teams outside of our conference."

If there was a silver lining to the possibility of playing in the WNIT, it would be that Oregon most likely will host a first round game. Unlike the NCAA Tournament where teams play a majority of games on a neutral floor, the WNIT is held exclusively on campus sites, and with the Ducks leading the Pac-10 in attendance for the third-straight year, McArthur Court is a possible destination.

After hosting the inaugural Pac-10 Tournament and garnering rave reviews

from other Pac-10 squads, as well as league executives, the Ducks believe Mac Court would be an ideal host and could give the team a huge boost.

"It gave us an advantage," Kraayeveld said about the tournament. "Even if they cover up the Oregon stuff (like they did for the Pac-10), it's still great for us."

Smith agreed with Kraayeveld's sentiments.

"Our fans would look forward to it," she said. "I don't think there could be a better place (to play)."

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