

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

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Different endings to storybook Duck seasons

Men toppled in Elite Eight by Jayhawks

■ The Oregon men lose to Kansas in the Elite Eight, and are disappointed despite the successful season

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

MADISON, Wis. — Oregon head coach Ernie Kent stopped for a moment and closed his eyes as the madness swirled around him before the tip-off of this monumental game.

The moment stretched into a half-minute.

With bands blaring, announcers jabbering and fans screaming, Kent ended the serene minute by crossing his chest,

then clapping his hands in support of his Duck basketball team about to take the floor.

Whether or not Kent's prayer was answered, the No. 2 Ducks' prayers to knock off top-seeded Kansas in the Elite Eight were not. The Jayhawks advanced to the Final Four with a 104-83 victory in front of 16,310 fans at the Kohl Center in Madison on March 24.

"This one hurts because you're so close to the Final Four," Kent said after the game.

Kent's words mirrored the disappointment of the entire Oregon team, despite the fact that the Ducks were underdogs to the Jayhawks, who went through much of the season ranked No. 1 in the country.

"Coming into this game there was no doubt in my mind that we could win," Oregon senior guard Freddie Jones said after the contest. "I think if we were a team that didn't feel we could win, we would be happy right now. But we're not satisfied with how far we came because we expected ourselves to get to the Final Four and compete for the whole thing."

Instead, Kansas competed in the Final Four, but was knocked out by Maryland in the semifinal game Saturday. In



Thomas Patterson Emerald

Jamie Craighead (with trophy) and the Ducks celebrate their win in the WNIT Championship game.

that game the Jayhawks displayed few traits of the juggernaut that steamrolled Oregon one week prior.

Kansas was relentless on the boards in the Elite Eight contest, outrebounding Oregon 63-34. Two Jayhawk players — Drew Gooden and Nick Collison — combined for one more total rebound than the entire Duck squad.

"They really did control the boards, and that was a big thing in the game," Oregon forward Luke Jackson said. "They got a lot of second-chance points."

Jackson's observation was on the mark. Kansas scored 31 second-chance points to Oregon's 12.

But despite the dominance of the Jayhawk big men, the game still lived up to its "track meet" billing. At the outset it was clear the both teams wanted to run the floor — fast. The first half took only 45 minutes to complete.

"They ran just as fast as us," Oregon guard Anthony Lever said. "We were going to keep running no matter what."

The fast play led to 20 total steals and

Turn to Men's, page 6

Women 'WNIT' all, thanks to standout Kraayeveld shot

■ Ducks earn first postseason title since 1989 behind the play of tournament MVP Cathrine Kraayeveld

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

Your name is Cathrine Kraayeveld and you've averaged 10.2 points and 9.1 rebounds per game during Pacific-10 Conference play.

The Pac-10 Tournament is over, and the Ducks are resigned to playing in the Women's National Invitation Tournament.

If you're the sophomore from Kirkland, Wash., what do you do next?

Kraayeveld answered that question with a simple layup at McArthur Court. Only, it wasn't that simple.

Tied with the Houston Cougars, 52-52, entering the last 20 seconds of the WNIT Championship on Wednesday, the Ducks turned to Kraayeveld for help. Two weeks earlier, the Pac-10 All-Academic honorable mention honoree led the Ducks to a 50-48

win over Oregon State with game-winning shot after garnering the game's last rebound.

It would only be natural for her to become the star once again.

With 2.4 seconds left, the WNIT's Most Valuable Player cut through the paint and beautifully finger-rolled the ball into the cylinder, clinching Oregon's 22nd win of the season, and first postseason championship since a WNIT title in 1989.

"I wasn't even thinking about (it being a game-winning shot)," Kraayeveld said. "I just took it to the hole, because that's the only thing I thought would work."

The game marked Oregon's fifth straight win. The Ducks had defeated St. Mary's (Calif.), Oregon State, Washington, and Michigan State en route to the WNIT Championship game.

Against Washington on March 20 in Seattle, the Ducks were staring down the barrel of a gun. For the fourth time this season, Oregon was to battle its conference foe, already having won two-of-three games against the Huskies.

With two teams so evenly matched, the law of averages were in Washington's hands. The Ducks had lost to the Huskies in the teams' only other matchup at Bank of America Arena.

Senior Jamie Craighead had something to say to the doubters.

In her final collegiate game in her home state, Craighead was 5-of-13 from beyond the three-point arc, including three in the final 2:15 of the game. Her last one, with 41.6 seconds left, gave the Ducks enough of an oomph for a 77-73 win over Washington.

Turn to Women's, page 6

Oregon softball raises record to 18-11, will host No. 14 OSU

■ With outstanding pitching and timely hitting, the Ducks got ready for the Pac-10 stretch

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

Before many Oregon students left for sun-filled spring break destinations, the Oregon softball team held a record of 14-8.

Confined to the cozy comforts of Eugene during most of their time away from academics, head coach Brent Rincon's squad ran a record of 4-3 during the break, which included two losses in Corvallis to Oregon State.

The seven-game stretch began March 23 with an Oregon sweep of a doubleheader against Colorado State, the Ducks winning

the first game 5-2 and the second 4-0. In the second game, sophomore Anissa Meashintubby picked up the shutout, allowing only four hits on six strikeouts.



many opportunities they had to provide run support.

The string of shutouts continued with two-straight Oregon wins over the Rebels of UNLV during Friday's doubleheader. The Ducks won the first game 2-

0 behind Meashintubby's third shutout of the season.

In the second game, senior Connie McMurren stepped up with a pitching performance for the record books. In a 5-0 win, McMurren threw the first no-hitter of her career, striking out six and walking five. It was the 12th no-hitter in Oregon history and the first since Bethany Smith's in 1997.

"We had tremendous pitching today and I think we've really turned the corner and are ready for Pac-10 play," Rincon said after the doubleheader with UNLV. "These were great performances by both pitchers, and I'm very pleased with how we played today."

Pacific-10 Conference play began for the Ducks on Friday when they traveled to Corvallis for a two-game weekend against

the No. 14 Beavers. Oregon State blanked the Ducks in the Friday contest 2-0. The only two runs of the game were scored in the bottom of the first inning, with Meashintubby shutting down Oregon State after the shaky first frame. Only Alyssa Laux and Lakeesha Eversley could collect hits for Oregon.

The Saturday contest was another win for the strong Beaver team as they won in a tight 3-2 ballgame. The Ducks trailed 3-1 heading into the seventh and staged a rally but could only muster one run.

The season series with Oregon State continues today in a game that was rescheduled because of snow March 16. The game at Howe Field begins at 2 p.m.

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