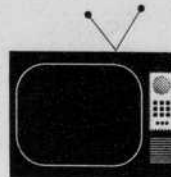


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Best Bet
NBA: L.A. Clippers at Dallas
6 p.m., TNT



Thursday, April 4, 2002

Progressing toward the Future

It may not have been an NCAA Tournament quality season, but the Ducks still achieved success

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

When Bev Smith took over as the Oregon women's basketball coach in June 2001, words like "pressure" and "healing" were mentioned at a rate that would make most basketball players blush.

But now, after 22 wins and a Women's National Invitation Tournament championship, there is one word Smith can use with confidence: "Progress."

"I think that's what this year was all about," she said.

So big deal that the Ducks didn't make the NCAA Tournament. Who cares that they finished tied for sixth in the Pacific-10 Conference?

Smith does, but she understands the importance of any form of postseason play.

Granted, the NCAA was the desired postseason destination, and a better finish in regular season play would have given Oregon a better seed in the conference tournament, but overall, success followed

wherever the Ducks went.

"I'm just now realizing the fact that there are two teams that end their season with a win," Smith said after returning from the women's NCAA Final Four in San Antonio.

Many of Smith's players agreed with that sentiment.

"At the end of the year, there are only four national champions," junior Shaquala Williams said of both men's and women's tournaments. "Maybe it's not the Big Dance, but it's a start towards what we want to accomplish next year."

Four seniors ended their Oregon careers with a WNIT championship. Ednisha Curry, who averaged 9.8 points and 3.25 assists per game in her only season as a Duck, and two-year starter Jamie Craighead will leave the Oregon backcourt.

Turn to **Basketball**, page 12

After shaky opening for Ducks, Bev shows she did know best



Adam
Jude
Out in left field

In every sense, it was a season on the brink for the Oregon women's basketball team. As the season began, one of the most successful Pacific-10 Conference programs of the last decade suddenly found itself in unknown territory, a black hole with no foreseeable ending.

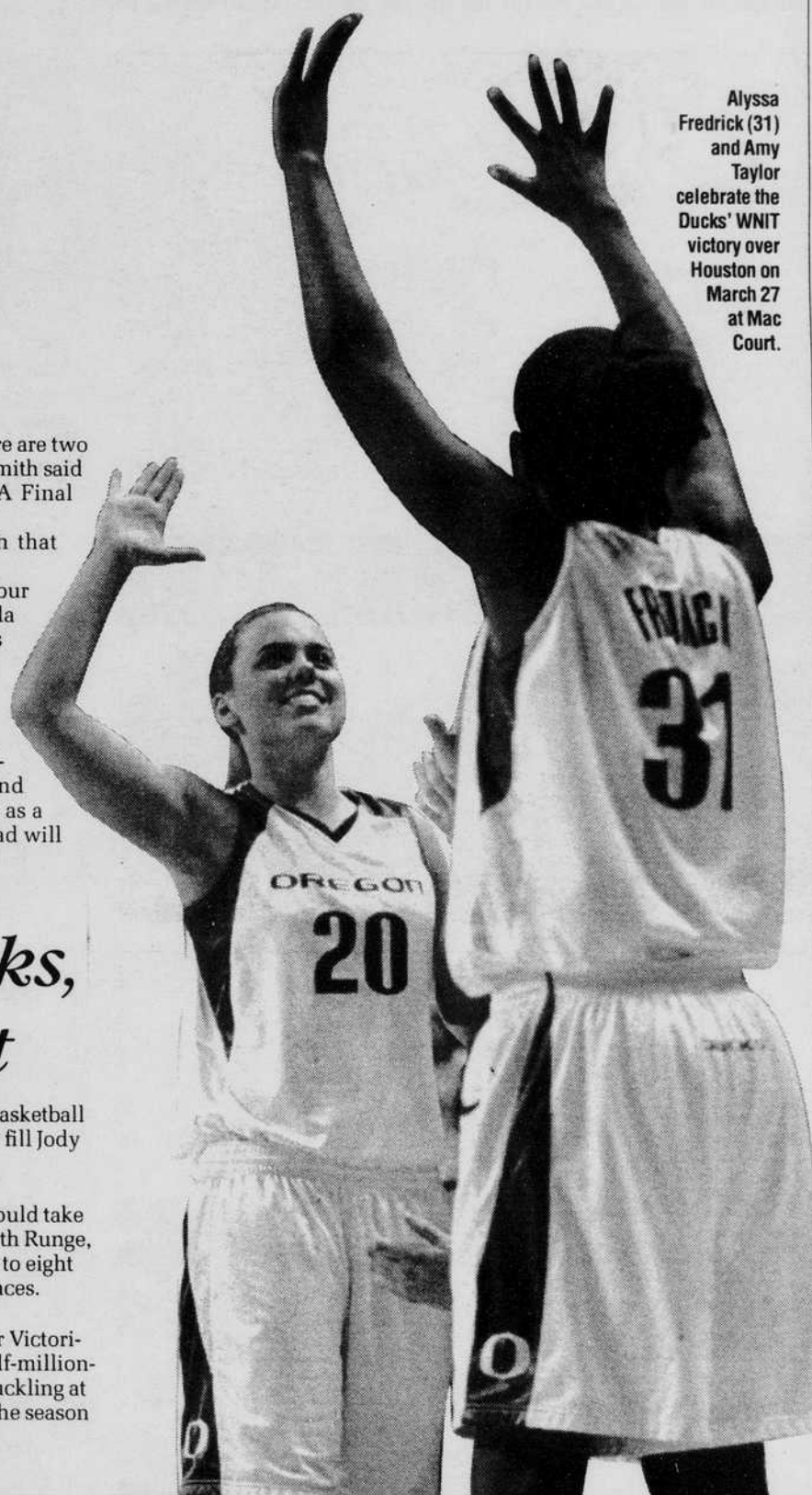
Ha. After a couple wrong turns, first-year head coach Bev Smith found the right road... which led to a national championship. There were some early skept-

tics — those long-time Oregon women's basketball supporters who thought Bev would never fill Jody Runge's giant high heels.

Ha. Many thought the women's program would take years to recover from its brutal divorce with Runge, the former head coach who led the Ducks to eight consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances.

Ha. Bev needed just 10 months. It's easy to picture Runge, nestled in her Victorian-style Portland home, collecting her half-million-dollar settlement from the University, chuckling at the mediocrity of Smith's squad early in the season

Turn to **Jude**, page 12



Alyssa Fredrick (31) and Amy Taylor celebrate the Ducks' WNIT victory over Houston on March 27 at Mac Court.

Photo Illustration by Thomas Patterson Emerald

Oregon track teams head to Texas Relays with emphasis on field

MEN'S: The men enter only field athletes into this weekend's Texas Relays meet — the runners stay home

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

For the Oregon men's track and field team, most of the attention in recent weeks has been focused on the track.

Now it shifts to the field.

Eleven Duck athletes from the team's field contingent will compete in five events over three days this weekend at the Texas Relays in Austin, Texas. Adam Kriz, who will shoot for a Pacific-10 Conference championship-qualifying distance in the hammer throw, is Oregon's only entrant today.

But on Friday, the Ducks will hit the Texas track in full force. Foluso Akinradewo will try to extend his Pac-10 distance in the triple jump into an NCAA distance. Trevor Woods will try to move from the NCAA's provisional list onto the automatic list in the pole vault, and John Stiegeler — currently leading the nation in the javelin — will lead a strong Oregon contingent in that event.

Though the season is young, Stiegeler appears ready to continue his dominance in the javelin that started with his school-record heave of 252 feet, 10 inches to win the NCAA championship last season. Stiegeler threw 247 feet at this year's first outdoor meet.

On Saturday, Jason Boness will lead a trio of Oregon jumpers who have notched Pac-10 heights.

The Texas meet is the fifth outdoor meet of the season for the Ducks. Through four previous meets, Oregon boasts three NCAA automatic qualifiers, one NCAA provisional qualifier and 23 Pac-10 qualifiers.

In last weekend's action, the Ducks got NCAA-qualifying times from Jason Hartmann in the 10,000-meter race and Simon Kimata in the 800.

"It's good to get the qualifying time under your belt, so you can get some confidence and focus on the rest of the season," Hartmann said.

Turn to **Men's track**, page 4A

WOMEN'S: The women's track team returns to the site of its first national championship in 1985

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

In 1985, the Oregon women's track and field team took its first ever NCAA championship, then held in Austin, Texas.

Seventeen years have passed since the Duck women last saw success in the southern city. In fact, in the 74 previous years of the Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays, no Oregon woman has participated in the event.

Until this year.

Mary Etter's turn in the hammer throw, scheduled for 2 p.m. today at Mike A. Myers Stadium, marks the return of the Oregon women to their former glory.

After two successive outdoor weeks, Texas becomes an important stepping ground.

"We need a big meet," head coach Tom Heinonen said. "Our athletes need to train and compete in a really tough environment and see how they handle that."

With athletes from across the country

competing in the four-day event, it will be an intense and complex competition for the Oregon athletes. No Ducks participated Wednesday, the first day of the Relays, but spectators will see a bevy of Oregon women until the meet's completion on Saturday.

The Ducks have yet to see an outdoor event that has lasted for more than one day, something that Heinonen welcomes with open arms.

"It's valuable for our team to be at a multiple-day meet because the Pac-10s are two days," he said, referring to the conference championships in Pullman, Wash., in May.

In addition, the meet will provide the Duck women an opportunity to gain higher marks in a more competitive field, essentially sizing themselves up to the rest of the country. Plus, it may relieve them from the monotony of a one-day event.

"It's really a unique opportunity," Heinonen said. "It's a break from the routine."

Etter and junior Jordan Sauvage will start off the day for Oregon in a field of 23 in the event.

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