

SPORTS

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Best Bet
MLB: Oakland at Seattle
7 p.m., FSN



Friday, April 5, 2002

Duck softball hosts No. 3, No. 6

■ Oregon softball hosts three games this weekend against No. 3 Stanford and No. 6 California

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

After three straight losses in their first Pacific-10 Conference games of the season, the Oregon softball team begins a three-game weekend set starting today.

The Ducks (18-12 overall, 0-3 Pac-10) will host No. 3 Stanford (30-5, 1-2) beginning at 2 p.m. at Howe Field and then will take on No. 6 California (35-11, 2-1) on Saturday and Sunday.

Coming off three losses to No. 14 Oregon State, the Ducks have been playing well but have yet to show that they can perform at the level of the rest of the conference. Every Pac-10 team other than Oregon is ranked in the top 25.

ON TAP

Who: Oregon softball vs. No. 3 Stanford
When: 2 p.m. today
Where: Howe Field

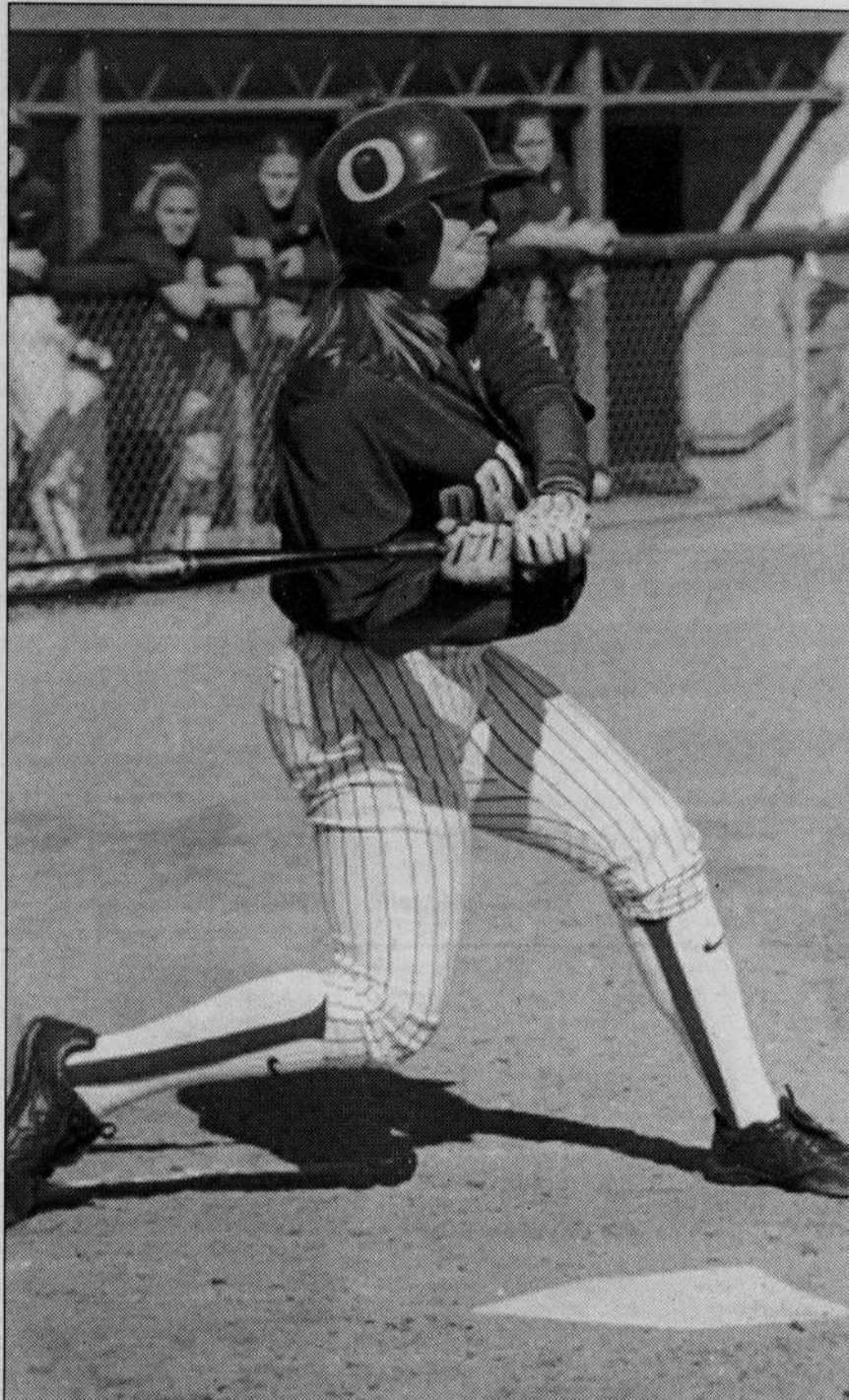
After Tuesday's loss to Oregon State, where the Beavers' Monica Hoffman threw a no-hitter against the Ducks, Oregon head coach Brent Rincon said he hoped his team will use the game as "a building block to get ready for the rest of the Pac-10."

"We feel that we can represent the University well and compete, and we do expect to win in this conference," Rincon said.

Over the Ducks' last six games, dating back to a loss to Colorado State on March 24, they have won just two games and scored more than two runs in a game only once — with a 5-0 win over UNLV. Although the team's hitting has struggled, the pitching rotation of Connie McMurren, Anissa Meashintubby and Lindsey Kontra has performed well.

"I'm encouraged beyond belief," Rincon said. "Our pitching has just been outstanding. One error in three games (against Oregon State) and good pitching — that's a great situation. We've just got to add to the equation

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Adam Amato Emerald

Andrea Vidlund and the Oregon offensive attack look to get back on track against Stanford and California this weekend. Vidlund is hitting .386 with seven home runs and 31 RBI.

Ducks earn high marks in first day

■ Despite a limited day of action, the Oregon track and field team earns three top 10 finishes

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

Day one of the Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays in Austin began with a bang for the Oregon women's track team.

The Ducks' 4x800 relay team took second place in the event with a time of eight minutes 50.01 seconds. The Texas-San Antonio entry took first almost a full five seconds ahead of the Ducks.

The squad — featuring juniors Eri Macdonald and Carrie Zografros, sophomore Annette Mosey and freshman Laura Harmon — highlighted the day for head coach Tom Heinonen. However, to say that the squad was unable to post impressive marks would be an incorrect statement.

Junior Jordan Sauvage threw a career best of 177 feet 1 inch in the hammer to place eighth in the event, won by Nebraska senior Melissa Price. Junior Mary Etter was not far behind at 16th, with a distance of 161-10.

Ending the day for the Ducks was junior Alicia Snyder-Carlson in the 400 hurdles. She placed sixth in preliminary heat four with a time of 1:08.16, failing to make the final race.

On the men's side, Adam Kriz took seventh in the hammer throw at a distance of 197-09, a career best for the junior from Toledo, Ore. His grandparents, residents of nearby San Antonio, saw him compete for the first time.

"You have to do well in front of grandma and grandpa," Kriz said. "I also like this hammer throw area, itself. The fans are up close behind you, and it's almost claustrophobic. You get a lot of energy from the fans. Plus there's a lot of great talent, including the national leader, so you know it'll be a quality competition."

After the first day of competing, the Ducks have made an impressive statement to the rest of the field. However, today's events will give the teams a chance to really shine.

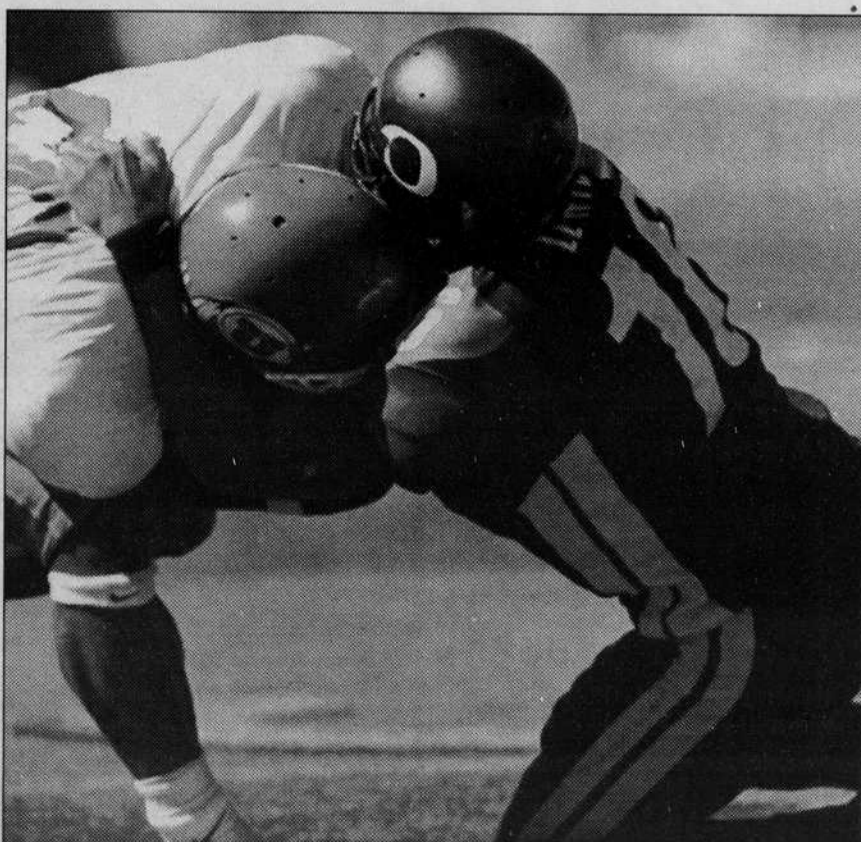
Also on the men's side, NCAA champion John Stiegeler began his quest for first in the javelin throw. Along with sophomore Adam Jenkins, the Ducks look to excel in the event.

Oregon will also debut at the relays in the men's triple jump and pole vault.

On the women's side, the team's field events should lead the way. Junior Charyl Weingarten leads a contingent of javelin throwers who have become one of the best in the country.

"We really want to show off our javelin throwers," Heinonen said.

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Adam Amato Emerald

Junior free safety
Keith Lewis is one of seven defensive starters returning to spring drills.

Defense must re-prove itself

■ Although there are seven returning starters, the Oregon defense must again silence critics during spring drills

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon defense never gets a break.

Despite a solid returning core — seven starters from last year's team that finished No. 2 in the country — the defense of the Ducks' football team is still under scrutiny this spring, much like it was last year when just four defensive starters returned.

"Every year since I've been here, someone is always questioning the defense," senior rover Rasuli Webster said after Oregon's second spring practice Thursday. "But every year, the defense shows up."

The defensive line, which helped hold Colorado to just 53 yards rushing in the Fiesta Bowl, may be the most improved from a year ago. In addition to Webster and free safety Keith Lewis,

Oregon returns six defensive linemen (three starters) plus two linebackers — David Moretti and Kevin Mitchell.

"Our front seven should be much improved," head coach Mike Bellotti said.

While the biggest challenge for the offense is to solidify the quarterback position, the defense will spend its spring finding replacements for both cornerback spots and a new outside linebacker.

"We're not just out here teaching, but we want to evaluate each of them under stressful situations — like it would be in a game," Bellotti said.

Steven Moore and Courtney Miller, both juniors with little game experience, are two of the candidates to replace Rashad Bauman and Steve Smith at the corners.

"It's our job to try to make things better and make things easier for the new corners," Lewis said, referring to his leadership role with Webster. "When a corner gets beat, the whole secondary gets beat."

While Bellotti said nothing will be set in stone by the end of spring drills, he said he will have a good idea of who

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