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Duck softball drops three to Arizona schools at home

■ Struggling Ducks fall to No. 6 Arizona State 9-1 on Friday and to No. 1 Arizona 2-0 on Saturday and 8-1 on Sunday

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

Chalk up another rough weekend for the Oregon softball team at Howe Field.

The Ducks (18-18 overall, 0-9 Pacific-10 Conference) dropped three games to extend their losing streak to nine — falling to No. 6 Arizona State on Friday and No. 1 Arizona on Saturday and Sunday.



The weekend began for Oregon with a 9-1 drubbing at the hands of the Sun Devils (35-10, 5-3) in a game that lasted only six innings because of the eight-run rule. Arizona State scored three runs in each of the first two innings and then tallied one in the fourth and two more in the sixth. The Ducks' lone run came in the fifth.

Arizona State's winning pitcher Erica Beach contributed offensively by smacking a two-run homer in the sixth, while Anissa Meashintubby picked up the loss for Oregon.

The Oregon pitching staff fared much better against Arizona (38-5, 7-1) in the following two games. Freshman southpaw Lindsey Kontra threw for the Ducks on Saturday, allowing two runs on five hits and four walks while striking out six.

Through the fourth inning, she had only allowed one hit.

"Lindsey did a great job pitching and really kept them off balance all day," Oregon head coach Brent Rincon said.

Kontra's pitching performance was bettered by Arizona's Jennie Finch, a 6-foot senior who improved her record to 22-1 with her 14th shutout of the season.

The Wildcats' runs came from two RBIs from Loveianne Jung, who knocked a solo home run in the fifth and a single in the seventh that scored Carrie Hagen.

"I really don't think the score today was indicative of how close the game was. We battled them hard."

Brent Rincon
Oregon head coach

Through both weekend games against Arizona, Kontra and Connie McMurren — who threw six-and-a-third innings Sunday — held Arizona's top hitting star Leneah Manuma hitless. But the Wildcats found other ways to score.

"Arizona is a phenomenal ball club, and they are going to get their hits," Rincon said. "They are the No. 1 team in the country and they just have too many weapons."

McMurren held Arizona hitless through most of three and scoreless through four before the Wildcats offense began to click. They tallied

one run in the fifth, two in the sixth and five in the seventh to break the game open.

"I really don't think the score today was indicative of how close the game was," Rincon said. "We battled them hard."

In the Oregon half of the sixth with the score 3-0, the Ducks gave Arizona a scare. Amber Hutchison led off the inning by reaching on an error by second baseman Lisha Ribellia. Alyssa Laux followed by drawing a walk, and Lynsey Haij advanced the two runners with a well-placed sacrifice bunt. Andrea Vidlund, who leads the Ducks with a .363 average and seven home runs, sent a long drive to right that was tracked down by Arizona's Meaghan Finnerty just short of the wall. Both runners advanced, but Hutchison's run was all the Ducks could muster.

Despite remaining winless in the Pac-10, the Ducks are still holding their heads high.

"We're not panicking yet," Rincon said. "We just need to continue to get better, and this weekend we did some things to get better, especially in the Arizona series. The pitchers did a good job over the last two days — I think they are up to the challenge. Overall I'm not displeased with how we battled."

"Obviously I'm not happy with the outcome, but if they keep their intensity up and keep battling the way we have, we've still got a chance to be a pretty good team."

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

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UO golfers 'peaking' at right time

The Oregon men's golf team shot its second straight 8-under 280 Saturday to finish fourth at the ASU Thunderbird Invitational, played at the 7,027-yard, par-72 Karsten Golf Course in Tempe, Ariz. The Ducks, unranked in this week's Golfweek/Sagarin top 25, finished higher than seven ranked opponents.

"We had a great tournament," Oregon head coach Steve Nosler said. "This tournament is a who's who of golf, and we competed extremely well."

Chris Carnahan finished third after a 1-over 73 Saturday. The junior from Albany was 11-under for the tournament at 205, which included a career-low round of 64 on Friday. It was Carnahan's highest finish since taking second in the season opener — the Northwest Collegiate

Classic last September.

Senior Aaron Byers, another Albany native, had a final round 68 and finished tied for 19th at 5-under



211. Junior John Ellis shot a 69 Saturday and tied for 31st at 2-under

214. Senior Chris Heniff, competing as an individual, tied his best round as a collegian with an even-par 72 Saturday.

"There were birdies available out there, and we took advantage of those opportunities," Nosler said. "The guys just hung in there and played hard all the way."

No. 7 Texas won the event with a 32-under 832 total, while host Arizona State was second at 26-under

838. No. 24 Pepperdine was third at 25-under 839, while the Ducks shot a 21-under 843.

Oregon finished higher than several nationally ranked teams, including No. 6 Oklahoma State (848), No. 8 Texas Christian (845), No. 9 USC (854), No. 11 Washington (869), No. 17 Oklahoma (856), No. 22 New Mexico (853) and No. 25 Arizona (845).

"It was a real high national-caliber tournament," Nosler said. "Eleven of our last 12 rounds have been very good. I think we're peaking at the right time."

Oregon returns to action next weekend in the U.S. Intercollegiate at Stanford, before gearing up for the Pac-10 Tournament April 25-27 at Trysting Tree in Corvallis.

— from staff and wire reports

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