

Aaron encourages Bonds to shoot for record

By Mac Engel

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HOUSTON (KRT) — On a cool, moonless night at The Ballpark in Arlington this past winter, the gray-haired teacher took aside his eager pupil.

"Do anything you want to try to break it," the teacher instructed. "If you break it, you have my blessing."

The teacher was Hank Aaron. The pupil was Barry Bonds.

"It" is the major-league record of 755 career home runs. "It" currently belongs to Aaron.

When Aaron retired in 1976, his

record was promptly put on the nobody's-going-to-come-close mantle alongside Ty Cobb's 4,191 career hits and Lou Gehrig's 2,130 consecutive games played.

Until Bonds. While others such as Mark McGwire flirted with the concept of reaching 755, Bonds has been getting hot 'n' heavy with it.

He has 130 home runs in his past two-plus years, including the single-season record of 73 last season.

Everybody thinks Bonds has a shot at 755. Everybody except Bonds.

"My time is done," Bonds said. "I

have four or five years left and that's it. It's not enough time for me, and that's just reality."

Despite his own doubts, Bonds' 577 career home runs at age 38 make him baseball's best immediate chance to break Aaron's record. As the daily pressures and attention grow, Aaron told Bonds to go for it, but at the same time not to imprison himself to the chase.

"I think Barry is the most remarkable offensive player that I have ever seen," Astros general manager Gerry Hunsicker said. "I've seen some of the greats like (Willie)

Mays, Aaron, (Stan) Musial, but Barry ... he doesn't seem to have a weakness right now. To me, it's just how long he can stay mentally focused without the pressure getting to him."

Coming off his rock-star-tour 2001 season, Bonds has displayed no signs of mental fatigue. Through Monday, he is batting .391 with 10 home runs and 19 runs batted in.

His start included four home runs in his first two games. His seventh this season, career home run No. 574, moved him past Harmon Killebrew for sixth all-time. The

ridiculous start immediately had talk-show hosts and ESPN's "SportsCenter" projecting when, not if, Bonds would break Aaron's record.

"He really didn't have a great spring, but as soon as we got to a big-league park, he just turned it on," Giants shortstop Rich Aurilia said. "I guess he is the epitome of the guy who can turn it on when he wants to."

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Women's

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third NCAA Tournament of her career. She has a 1-2 career record in the tournament, beating South Florida's Genevieve Houle her freshman year.

The team, which has won six of its past seven matches heading into the tournament, has been stressing doubles in practice.

"We are again changing things up in our doubles lineup, trying to find the right doubles teams," Griffin said. "We can't continue to lose the doubles point and expect to beat the good teams."

The No. 39 Ducks will face No. 18 UNLV in the first round in Los Angeles. USC is hosting the regional and could face Oregon if both win in the first round. But Oregon assistant coach Nils Schyllander said the team needs to focus on beating the Rebels.

"UNLV is a very good team, especially at home," Schyllander said. "But fortunately we get them on courts we know."

UNLV head coach Kevin Cory is a former Duck. Cory was a four-

year letterman at Oregon, playing No. 1 singles and doubles his senior year. He graduated in 1990 with a bachelor's degree in sports management.

The former Roseburg High coach led UNLV to a 20-3 overall record this year, including 11 wins against ranked opponents.

Even though this tournament is her final chance to compete for the Ducks, Nyland isn't changing her goals.

"If we go out there and compete hard, then the results are secondary," Nyland said. "But it would be great to win and to get another shot at USC."

Ducks honored by Pac-10

Three Oregon tennis players, Nyland plus Manuel Kost and Oded Teig from the men's team, were named to the all-Pac-10 honorable mention team Monday. The recognition is the first for each of the Oregon athletes.

Splitting time at the top two singles spots, Kost, a freshman, and Teig, a junior, led the Oregon men's team to a 12-11 overall record this season.

Peter Martini is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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events, but will only compete in one race at the conference meet on May 18 in Pullman, Wash.

"It will depend on where I can score the best," Logsdon said.

That likely means the 5,000, where Logsdon ranks eighth in the conference after Friday's performance. He is ranked lower in the 1,500, and the Pac-10 is noted for its strong runners in that event.

Logsdon is unsure of his status for this weekend's Twilight Meet at Hayward Field. He said he might not compete so he can focus on Pac-10s.

Softball

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Nuveman was named Pac-10 Player of the Week.

In the Bruins' three games — one against Oregon and two with Oregon State — Nuveman swatted for a .571 batting average (4-for-7) with one double, two home runs, five walks and an on-base percentage of

Air Jordan

Jordan Kent, the Ducks' most prized recruit for next season, is currently making the high school kids wish he was already at Oregon.

Jordan, the son of Duck basketball coach Ernie Kent, is leading the Oregon high school ranks in four different events. He holds state records in the 200 and long jump, and he's working on the 100 and the 400, the other two events that he leads in Oregon.

Ironically, Kent will attend Oregon on a basketball scholarship. The multi-sport star will play both sports next season. But when Kent returns to Hayward Field for the state high school championships

May 24, it will give the Oregon fans a chance to see, up close, the Ducks' biggest recruit doing his track thing.

In the polls

The Ducks are climbing the national charts with strong individual showings over the past few weeks. Oregon jumped to ninth in the most recent "power rankings" on www.team-power.org, which ranks the national teams based on this season's personal bests. The Ducks are ranked 24th by Trackwire, which uses methodology different from team-power.org.

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.750. She has helped the Bruins to a top national ranking, and continues to help as they remain tied for first in the conference.

Nuveman's season totals now stand at 17 home runs and 58 RBI with a .555 average, a 1.066 slugging percentage and a .674 on-base percentage. Earning the Pitcher of the Week honors in the Pac-10 was Arizona's Jennie Finch, who went 3-0 from April 29 to May 5

against No. 4 Arizona State, No. 5 California and No. 8 Stanford. The 6-foot senior, who was recently featured in Sports Illustrated's "Faces in the Crowd," ended the week with a 0.67 ERA with 18 strike outs.

Finch is second in the conference in strike outs with 293 and has posted 17 shutouts this season.

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