

Bakke

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the first day of the meet. The NCAAs last through Saturday.

Academi-Ducks

Three Oregon track and field athletes were given honors of a different kind than NCAA qualifying marks on Thursday.

Pac-10 decathlon champion Billy Pappas and senior distance runner Adam Bergquist were named to the Verizon District VIII All-Academic first team, while sophomore pole vaulter Woods was named to the second team.

Pappas, a psychology major with a 3.61 GPA, was also named to the same academic honor last season, as well as being named to the Pac-10 All-Academic team.

It was the first such honor for Bergquist, an exercise and movement science major who maintains a 3.99 GPA. Bergquist was named to the Pac-10 All-Academic team his sophomore and junior years.

Oregon was the only school with multiple representatives on the District VIII squad, which encompasses the entire west coast, Arizona and Hawaii.

E-mail sports reporter Peter Hockaday at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com.

Red Sox fans seek an end to the Curse

By Dick Polman
Knight Ridder Newspapers

SUDBURY, Mass. (KRT) — The Boston Red Sox are tearing up the American League, winning nearly 75 percent of their games, pounding the ball at a collective .300 clip, posting the best pitching stats in the circuit. No wonder their fans are miserable.

They last bestrode the baseball world during the Woodrow Wilson era, so they expect the worst. Maybe ace hurler Pedro Martinez blows out his arm for good. Or shortstop Nomar Garciaparra shatters his wrist again. Or the Green Monster wall falls on Rickey Henderson's head. Or slugger Manny Ramirez breaks a finger... wait, he just did that.

But all is not lost. Before the foliage turns color and the usual September swoon begins, before another ball inexplicably skips through a Sox fielder's legs, it is deemed imperative that Babe Ruth's piano be pulled from the murky depths of Willis Pond.

That's the deal: Find the piano, and break the Curse of the Bambino that has dogged this team since the Sox won their last World Series in 1918.

No kidding, the state of Massachusetts has issued a permit for divers to search the pond, in this suburb 20 miles west of Boston, because there's reason to believe that young Sox hurler Babe Ruth, while partying at the pond during the winter of 1918, pushed his piano into the drink, or perhaps slid it onto the ice and just let it sink.

Divers have descended twice, and they'll try

again soon. Kevin Kennedy, a local Sox fan who researched the piano and triggered the project, enthused: "This is the best chance we have of reversing the curse — or, rather, the perception of a curse. It'll take something sensational to reverse it. The piano went into the mud 84 years ago, and the Sox have been down there ever since."

Maybe it doesn't sound rational to tie a team's star-crossed legacy to the sinking of a piano, or (more typically) to the fact that Boston sold Ruth to the hated New York Yankees two winters later. But the curse seems as real, and tastes as sour, as the traditional autumn cider.

Forget the World Series dribbler that flummoxed Bill Buckner, and even the pop-fly homer by Yankee Bucky Dent in the '78 playoff. How about the '48 playoff loss? Or '49, when the Sox handed the pennant to the Yankees on the last weekend? Or '74, when they led their division by five games on Aug. 30 and finished seven back? Or the seventh-game World Series losses in '46, '67, '75 and '86? And that's just for starters.

David Kruh, whose play "The Curse of the Bambino" sold out a Boston theater last year, said the other day: "Everyone is interested in the piano. The fans feel helpless. They sit [at Fenway Park], and they know they can't affect the game or how the wind is blowing or whether Manny breaks his finger. So they ask, 'What can I do to help break the curse?' Some have tried exorcism. Kevin's trying his own thing."

Kennedy said: "You hate to whine, because there are more important things in life. Maybe we're a bunch of crybabies, I don't know. But we take our baseball seriously, so this quest of mine is from the heart" — or, as he pronounced it, the haht.

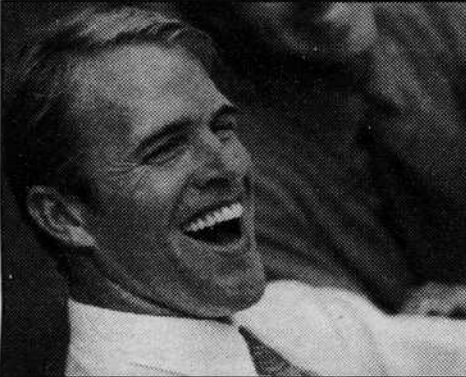
He has amassed solid evidence that Ruth rented a cabin at the pond's edge during the winter of 1917-18, and that Ruth's wife, Helen, played a piano to entertain the local kids. But stories about the piano's subsequent demise have been circulating here for 80 years. Kennedy heard them back when he was a Boy Scout.

Lee Swanson first got the word roughly half a century ago, when he was 12, hanging around his father's country store in Sudbury. As he recalled: "Our regulars would come in, always for tobacco and milk, and they'd sit on the barrels and talk. The story was consistently the same, no matter who said it. I also heard it over at the Congregational Church."

Actually, the details vary. Swanson, who runs the Sudbury Historical Society, discounts the claim that Ruth threw the piano in the pond. Not even Ruth was that strong, he said.

No, he thinks the piano sank during a party; as one elderly resident told him recently, "It was a disgrace to the neighborhood that he'd put a fine piano on the ice and lose it."

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I	D	E	A	S	T	A	K	E	A	F	T	E
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O	R	O		I	N	U	S	E		D	E	C
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