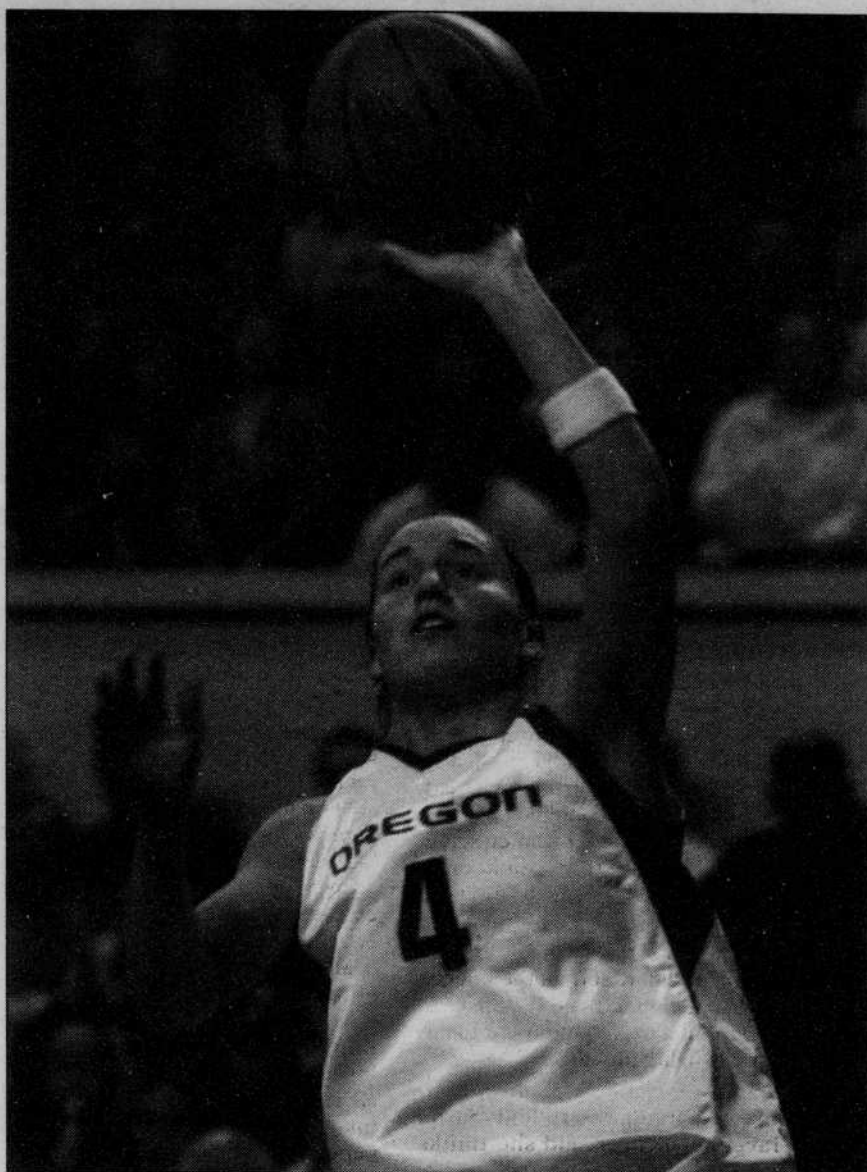


SPORTS

Best bet
NCAA men's basketball:
Oregon at Oregon State
6 p.m. Saturday, CBS

Friday, February 14, 2003



Adam Amato Emerald

Kayla Steen has averaged 5.1 points per game this season, her first with the Ducks after transferring.

Full Steen ahead

Kayla Steen has fought through injury to take on an important role with the Oregon team

Women's basketball

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

For some Oregon basketball players, the highlights of the regular season are the annual contests against rival Oregon State.

Twice a season, fans are afforded an opportunity to watch the state's powerhouses duke it out, once at Gill Coliseum in Corvallis and another time at McArthur Court in Eugene.

For the players, it's a chance to take on former teammates or players they've played against in high school. It also gives them a chance to be in the spotlight.

Kayla Steen is no different — except in the sense that she's getting the chance to play in only one Civil War contest this season instead of the usual two.

Steen, a junior transfer from Clackamas Community College in Oregon City, has had back problems plague her for most of the season. And for most of the season, she's played through the pain.

Except, of course, when the Ducks took on the Beavers on Jan. 18 in Corvallis.

"I was really, really disappointed I had to miss the first Civil War game I could have played in," Steen said. "I'm pumped coming into this next Oregon State game. I've heard a lot of things about the Civil War game, and I'm really excited to come out and help the team in any way I can."

The Ducks lost that game, 67-51, in what was the team's third-straight loss. Steen dressed for the contest but never played.

Coming into the season, Steen was a virtual unknown to Oregon fans.

Late last season, she was contacted by head coach

Bev Smith and the rest of the Duck program. She was being recruited, albeit late, to a Division I program in one of the nation's top conferences, the Pacific-10.

So it was a natural choice for Steen to come down to Eugene and end her collegiate career as a Duck.

"I knew I wanted to be close to home and I knew I wanted to play for a great program," she said. "When the opportunity came up — which was fairly late in the season that I was even contacted by UO — it was kind of one of those things I never thought would ever happen. It was something you couldn't pass up. You had to take advantage of it."

It wasn't as though the Ducks were going to be short at the guard position. Oregon had All-America candidate Shaquala Williams at point guard, program stalwart Alissa Edwards assuming a starting position and, overall, six full-time players at the position.

Steen was one of those six who had to fight for playing time.

"I think the expectation we had for her was that she was going to be an experienced player," Smith said. "Defensively, she can handle her own. Offensively, we saw her as a real good shooter and we still do see her as a shooter."

Then, Oregon's world seemed to come crashing down. Williams was dismissed from the team for good Dec. 9, just two days after the Ducks — minus Williams — had pulled off a come-from-behind victory over BYU in Portland.

The landscape of the team changed dramatically. Edwards moved primarily to the point, opening up the shooting-guard position.

Turn to **Steen**, page 12

Men need road wins; Civil War could be a start

The Ducks are close to 'must-win' territory as they head to Corvallis for Saturday's Civil War matchup

Men's basketball

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

It might be a little early to start calling this part of the season "the home stretch" for the Oregon men's basketball team.

But as they head to Corvallis on Saturday, the Ducks need to think about stretching — and flexing — their muscles for the last part of the season.

Oregon sat fifth in the conference before Thursday's games. The Ducks are 16-6 overall, but are only 6-5 in Pacific-10 Conference play with seven games remaining. Their remaining schedule is littered with potential land mines, including road games at upset-happy Washington, as well as Arizona State and Arizona.

Not to mention the potential land mine in Corvallis.

"Oregon State is a much-improved basketball team since the last time we played them, and they continue to get better," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said.

The Beavers have turned things around, slightly, since the Ducks faced them Jan. 18. That Oregon State team was 0-4 in Pac-10 play and was struggling to learn first-year coach Jay John's system.

But right after Oregon beat Oregon State 79-68 at McArthur Court, the Beavers went on a four-game win streak at home against the Washington schools and on the road at the Los Angeles schools.

Since then, Oregon State dropped games to California and Stanford by 13 and 11 points, respectively. But the Beavers aren't the same group of players that started the season so poorly.

"They're going to have a great crowd, and the fact that they have three (seniors) who have not won against us makes it that much more difficult for us," Kent said.

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Softball to travel to San Diego; freshman pitcher leads the way

The softball squad takes its 8-1 record to California in an attempt to win its third tournament in as many tries

Softball

Mindi Rice

Freelance Sports Reporter

"Right now we're just outplaying teams," softball head coach Kathy Arendsen said, after her squad won its second tournament in as many weeks.

Outplaying, outpitching, outhitting, outrunning; more specifically, winning.

Oregon is hitting each of these two weeks into preseason play. The Ducks have reasons to look up — 8-1 is the best start for Oregon softball since at least 1986, when records were first kept. Oregon now hopes to continue its good fortune into the third tournament of the preseason in rainy San Diego.

Outpitching

In the first Pacific-10 Conference Player and Pitcher of the Week awards of the season, Oregon freshman Amy Harris was awarded Pitcher of the Week. Harris, who is 3-1 in the Ducks' 8-1 season, earned back-to-back wins over ranked teams Friday and Saturday.

Harris, a graduate of North Eugene, is only the second Oregon pitcher to win the award. Connie McMurren, another North Eugene graduate, won the award as a freshman in 1999.

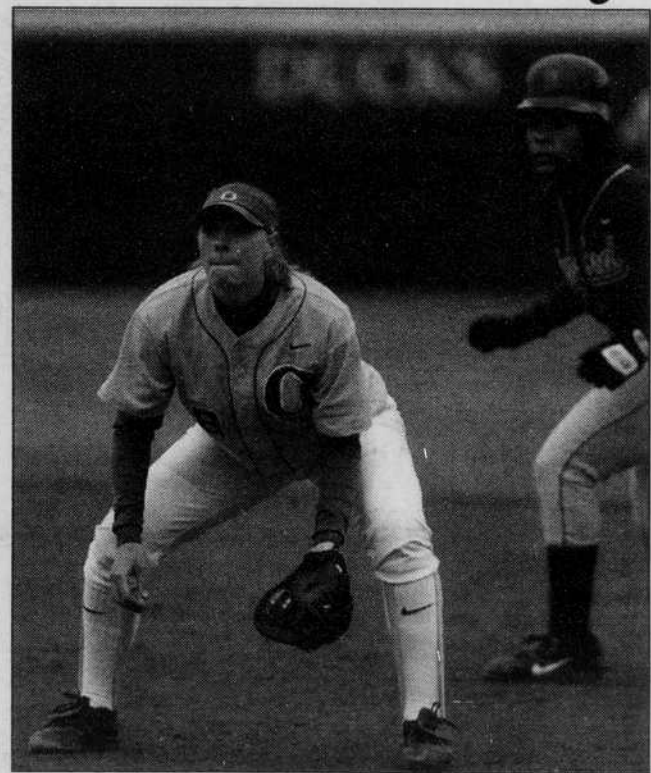
In the most recent tournament, Harris had nine strikeouts and only allowed one run in 13 2/3 innings pitched.

In five appearances, Harris has pitched 27 2/3 innings, with an ERA of 0.65, one complete game and a team-high 26 strikeouts. Her one loss came against Arkansas, 3-1. Harris earned only one of the three runs.

Sophomore Lindsey Kontra is 3-0 this season with a complete game. The pitching staff has a combined ERA of 0.94, while opponents have a 4.00 ERA.

Outhitting

Three Ducks are batting over .400 after two tournaments. Junior Jenn Poore is hitting .476 in 21 at-bats, while senior Andrea Vidlund is batting .462. Senior Lynsey Haij, who has played in all nine games, is hitting .464.



Adam Amato Emerald

Andrea Vidlund (front) is batting .462 for the Ducks, who are hitting well as a team. The Ducks' team batting average is .278 in nine games.

Oregon has 71 hits and 37 runs in nine games. Vidlund and sophomore Mari Lyn Petrick each have a home run on the season.

The Ducks have outscored their opponents 37-13 thus far in the season. Oregon is batting .278 as a team, while opponents are hitting .227 against the Ducks.

Outrunning

Oregon's opponents are 7-for-11 in stolen base attempts, Turn to **Softball**, page 16