

## SPORTS

Best bet  
NBA: Portland at Phoenix  
6 p.m., KEVU

Wednesday, March 5, 2003



Adam Amato Emerald

Chelsea Wagner has spent the year on the bench and says she's excited to see some playing time next year.

Back on the  
Duck pond

Chelsea Wagner spent a year at Hawaii when Jody Runge didn't recruit her, but she's a part of Bev Smith's basketball family now

## Women's basketball

Hank Hager  
Sports Reporter

The life of a redshirt athlete in women's college basketball is tough.

First, you've got to sit on the sideline during games, and the only time you get to come off the bench is to congratulate a teammate or cheer on a play. That is, you only get to do this at home games because NCAA rules stipulate that redshirt players can't travel with their respective schools.

Then, you practice all season long. You do basically everything the team does, only come Thursday and Saturday, you won't be able to contribute on the court.

Such is the life of Chelsea Wagner. Wagner, a sophomore, is one of two Oregon redshirts this season — the other is Corrie Mizusawa — but for the 5-foot-10-inch guard, it is a unique situation.

You see, Wagner grew up in Oregon's backyard, and starred at Springfield High School. She enjoyed such a fine senior season, *The Oregonian* and USA Today pegged her as the state's player of the year in 2001.

So why is she a transfer at Oregon, especially after spending a year at Hawaii?

The Ducks "knew she wanted to play in Oregon," Wagner's high school coach, Charlie Olds, said. "What surprised me most is the schools in the area didn't recruit her."

Wagner, a self-confessed Oregon fan practically since she was born, averaged 8.6 points per game last season at Hawaii, but decided after the season she wanted to come home. With the Ducks holding an open scholarship, that possi-

bility became reality.

"When I had my first meeting with (Oregon head coach Bev Smith), I was like, 'You don't understand, I've been a Duck my whole life,'" Wagner said. "She's been a Duck forever, and it was really nice to talk to someone who had the same feelings about a program and wanting to be involved in it so bad."

It could be said it is poetic justice that Wagner is returning home.

It isn't very often a player of Wagner's caliber — as evidenced by her player of the year awards — fails to be recruited successfully by an in-state school, much less one that sits only miles away.

But that was the case with Wagner. Olds said he was never contacted by anyone in state about Wagner, which includes former Oregon head coach Jody Runge. So when Hawaii came calling, Wagner accepted and spent a year under the sun.

Yet, she wanted more.

"I really wanted to be a Duck," Wagner said. "My whole life was like that. I grew up a Duck, so I might as well be a Duck. It was motivation because it was like, 'Why wouldn't they want me to come here and play?'"

"So going to Hawaii, I don't want to say last resort; it was just something that happened."

Nobody really knows why Runge didn't recruit Wagner heavily at the time, and for Smith, it was too late in the recruiting process when she took over the reins of the program.

Olds said he expects things were said about Wagner — albeit wrong — that shunned coaches away from her. He doesn't know what those things were, but believes they had something to do with it.

Whatever the rumor, Smith is happy to have her.

"We were excited," Smith said. "I didn't know, having not been here when Chelsea played high school basketball,

Turn to **Wagner**, page 6Seven wrestlers  
end season at  
Pac-10 tourney

Senior Tony Overstake ends his collegiate career with an 85-46 record after going 18-10 this season

## Wrestling

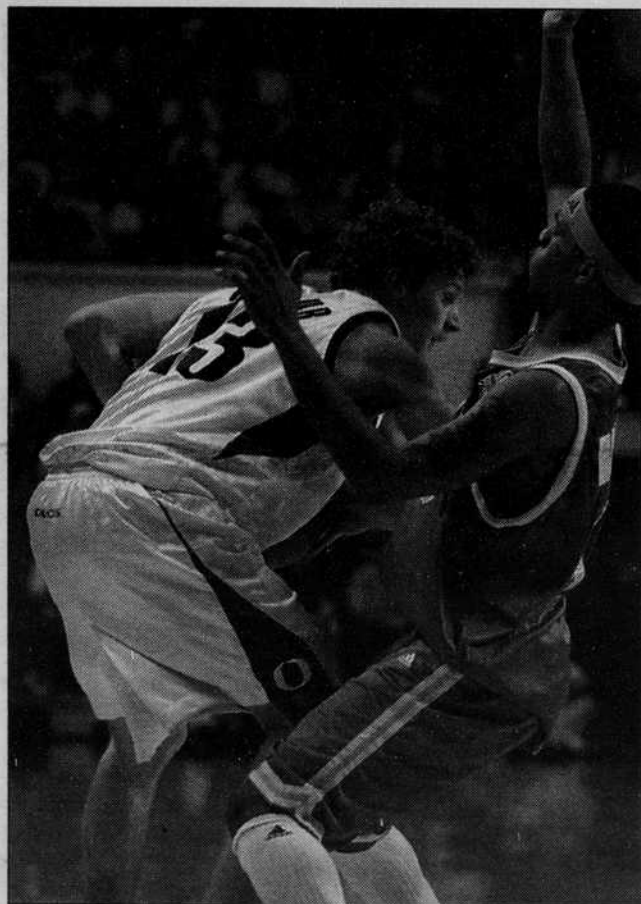
Mindi Rice

Freelance Sports Reporter

While three Ducks will see action on the mats in 15 days at the NCAA Championships, seven other starters ended their season at the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament last weekend.

With a 6-4 career record going into his junior season, Branson Phillips didn't know if he would be starting at 157. After a handful of matches during the preseason, Phillips went 5-5 during the dual season. He started the conference tournament with a loss, then came back to win two matches in consolation. Phillips then lost and was bumped to the fifth-place match. He won an 11-4 decision, earning fifth place and finishing the season 10-11 overall.

Despite finishing fourth in the conference tournament, redshirt sophomore Luke Larwin did not earn a berth in the NCAAs. Larwin lost his first match of the Pac-10s to Oregon State's Matt Ellis, but won his two consolation matches, setting up a rematch with Ellis. Larwin lost, earning fourth place. He was then challenged and subsequently bumped from a national berth. He finished his sophomore season with a 21-20 record at 165.

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Adam Amato Emerald

Luke Ridnour and the Ducks don't need to win both games in Arizona to make the NCAA Tournament, but they need them to improve their seeding when they do get to March Madness in three weeks.

UO men shoot  
for improved  
seed in NCAAs

A weak RPI rating has Oregon projected in the bottom half of the NCAA Tournament bracket as of right now

## Men's basketball

Adam Jude

Senior Sports Reporter

With Selection Sunday less than two weeks away, Oregon head coach Ernie Kent has reason to be nervous about his team's potential stance in the Big Dance.

In this week's version of Bracketology on ESPN.com, the Ducks are projected as a No. 9 seed in the NCAA Tournament, falling a spot from last week's projected field even though they swept USC and UCLA last weekend in the final home games of the season.

That position doesn't bode well for another run to the Elite Eight, where Oregon ended its season last year.

ESPN prognosticator Joe Lunardi has the Ducks as the No. 9 seed in the South with a first-round rematch against No. 8-seed Seton Hall on March 20 in Oklahoma City. Seton Hall ended Oregon's 2000 season in the first round with a 72-71 overtime victory.

If the Ducks (20-7 overall, 10-6 Pacific-10 Conference) defeat Seton Hall in this mock bracket, they would face No. 1-seed Texas — which Oregon defeated in the Sweet 16 last year

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