

SPORTS

Best bet
Pac-10 Tournament:
Oregon vs. UCLA
6:15 p.m., Fox Sports

Friday, March 14, 2003

Ridnour bursts doubt of NCAA berth

The guard's lay-up with 3.3 seconds left sinks Arizona State and secures the Ducks a spot in next week's NCAA Tournament

Men's basketball

Adam Jude
Senior Sports Reporter

The needle that the Oregon men's basketball team wanted so badly in the past week finally showed its face Thursday. In dramatic fashion, the Ducks used it to burst an enclosing bubble that was shadowing their NCAA Tournament hopes.

Luke Ridnour provided the final "pop" as he neeled through the Arizona State defense and hit a driving lay-in over Tommy Smith with 3.3 seconds left to give Oregon an 83-82 victory in the first round of the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

"That's just an awesome win for us," Ridnour told KUGN-radio. "It puts us over the (NCAA) hump, and we can just go play now and have fun."

The Ducks (21-9 overall) play eighth-seeded UCLA at 6:15 p.m. today for a spot in Saturday's title game. UCLA (10-18) shocked No. 1 Arizona in the first game of the tournament Thursday.

Now seemingly assured a spot in the Big Dance, the Ducks will find out their NCAA destination Sunday, but they would guarantee themselves a berth by winning the conference tournament title.

"I hope for all those people that said Oregon needed to win one (to get in the NCAA Tournament), they turn around and say we're in so we can get some positive energy going our way,"

head coach Ernie Kent said. Ridnour and the Ducks certainly had the positive vibes in the final seconds. But Arizona State (19-11) was feeling pretty good, too, with the game on the line.

Robert Johnson swished in a pair of free throws with 35 seconds left to give the Ducks a 79-74 lead, but Arizona State's unstoppable freshman, Ike Diogu, answered with a bucket. Diogu scored seven points in the final 1:23, and had 27 points and 18 rebounds in the game.

James Davis followed with two free throws, pushing the lead back to five. Then the Sun Devils took charge, scoring six points in less than three seconds.

After missing on his first try, Curtis Millage hit a three-pointer, and after an Oregon turnover on the inbounds play, Diogu was wide open under the hoop during ASU's inbounds possession. He got the ball, the bucket, the foul on Andre Joseph and the free throw to give the Sun Devils an 82-81 lead with 12.1 ticks left.

"When you look at all the drama that went on in the last minute of the game, there were a lot of mistakes by us, mistakes by them and mistakes by officials," Kent said. "We were fortunate to get it done, but, in my opinion, it should've never come down to that."

After Diogu's free throw, the Ducks didn't have any timeouts remaining. They huddled quickly to set up a high-screen play, which Luke Jackson set for Ridnour at the top of the key. Ridnour did the rest, and sent the Devils packing.

"To have the lead like that go away, to be all of a sudden down one with 12 seconds to go, you gotta give a lot of credit to our team," said Ridnour, the Pac-10 Player of the Year. "That's a lot

Turn to **Men's**, page 8



Adam Amato Emerald

Luke Ridnour hit a clutch lay-up with 3.3 seconds left to send Oregon into the second round of the Pac-10 tourney.

Bruins lead low-seed party on Pac-10's first day

UCLA shocks top-seeded and top-ranked Arizona in the first game of the Pac-10 Tournament

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

Lute Olson says he doesn't care about the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament.

But when his top-ranked Wildcats lost to Steve Lavin's UCLA Bruins in the tourney opener, it might've gotten a lot more fans to care.

UCLA's Ray Young hit a high, arching three-pointer with less than five seconds left in regulation to send the game into overtime, which the Bruins dominated to shock No. 1 Arizona, 96-89. UCLA, which only got into the Pac-10 Tournament with a win over Washington on Saturday, provided the biggest shock of the tournament's opening day.

UCLA, often accused this season of being a team that doesn't care, obviously cared about Thursday's game. Senior Jason Kapono, who

finished the game with 26 points, sang "Stayin' Alive" to the Fox Sports Net cameras in his postgame interview.

"Our team has been through a lot this season," Kapono told the television station.

That's an understatement. UCLA struggled to nine regular-season wins, faced criticism all year and rumors that head coach Steve Lavin would be fired at the end of the season. But the Bruins have now won five of their last seven, including three in a row.

"We're a different team this past month," Lavin said. "We're definitely playing our best basketball at the end of the year."

That was evident when the Bruins faced the Wildcats on Thursday. UCLA jumped out to an early lead, leading by as many as seven points with 12 minutes gone in the game. But Arizona stormed back and took the lead on a Luke Walton lay-in with 1:43 left in the first half. Arizona dominated the start of the

Turn to **Pac-10**, page 9



Emerald

Kirsten Riley is one of three women's pole vaulters heading to the NCAA Indoor meet.

Track heads to indoor finale

Oregon sends five athletes to the NCAA Indoor Championships, including three veterans who went to the meet last year

Track and field

Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

The Oregon men's and women's track and field teams will send a quintet of athletes to Fayetteville, Ark., for the weekend.

The Ducks accepted five invitations to the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships at the Randal Tyson Track Center.

Seniors Adam Kriz and Samie Parker will represent the men's team in the weight throw and 60-meter dash, respectively. Redshirt seniors Becky Holliday and Niki McEwen will also travel to the two-day meet to compete in the women's pole vault, along

with junior Kirsten Riley.

Kriz enters the competition ranked 15th nationally with a season best of 67 feet, 7 inches in the 35-pound weight throw. The Toledo native will make his NCAA indoor debut, and is ranked second of the Pacific-10 Conference entries.

"It's a compliment to be invited," Kriz said. "I'm going to go out and try to have fun and see where I stack up. I have nothing to lose."

Parker will be on familiar ground as he returns to the championship meet. The Long Beach, Calif., native claimed Oregon's first indoor All-American sprint honor last year in the 60-meter dash.

Parker ran 6.66 seconds in taking fourth last year, and has clocked a time as fast as 6.71 this season. He currently stands in a two-way tie for 13th nationally and is the only conference qualifier.

Holliday and McEwen will rival for the top spot in the pole vault as the two Duck seniors rank second and third on the national list, respectively. Holliday

Turn to **Track**, page 9