

NCAA 2003

DANCIN' WITH THE DUCKS



With a No. 8 seed, the Ducks will play Utah in Nashville, Tenn., in the first round of the NCAA Tournament on Friday

Adam Jude
Senior Sports Reporter

All they want to do is rest. The madness, however, is just beginning for the Ducks. After returning home Sunday from Los Angeles with the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament trophy,

the Oregon men's basketball team had little time to catch its breath.

The team was greeted by a large gathering of autograph-seeking fans at the Casanova Center. Then, about an hour later, the Ducks sat with anticipation as the NCAA Tournament field was selected.

Oregon, sweating out a possible bid a week ago, was named the No. 8 seed in the Midwest and will play No. 9-seed Utah on Friday in Nashville, Tenn., with a possible second-round matchup with No. 1 Kentucky.

In short, there will be no rest any time soon for the Ducks (23-9 overall), especially if they intend to make good on their goal of a Final Four appearance.

"This is going to be a long ride," Oregon senior forward Robert Johnson said after the announcement Sunday. "It's a tough little bracket with Kentucky, but Utah is another tough team. It's going to be a fight."

Oregon's hectic Sunday followed three grueling games in three days at the conference tournament,

which the Ducks say helped them improve their NCAA seed.

"It's a good draw for us," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "I think a No. 8 seed is a direct result of us going through that Pac-10 Tournament and winning that championship, which I think is a compliment."

After their Pac-10 regular-season championship last season, Oregon earned a No. 2 seed in the Midwest and went to the Elite Eight, where it lost to Kansas.

"We want to get back there and

do the same thing we did last year," Johnson told KUGN-AM after Saturday's game. "Once these new guys get to that environment, they'll realize how pumped we were, how much energy we had and the reason why we went that far."

Junior point guard Luke Ridnour, the Pac-10 Player of the Year and Pac-10 Tournament MVP, may be playing in his final games with the Ducks, but he said his focus is solely on the team.

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Mac attack

McArthur Court plays host to four women's teams in the first round, including No. 9-seed Washington

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In the 'Zona

One of five Pac-10 teams to earn an NCAA bid, Arizona is the No. 1 seed in the West region

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