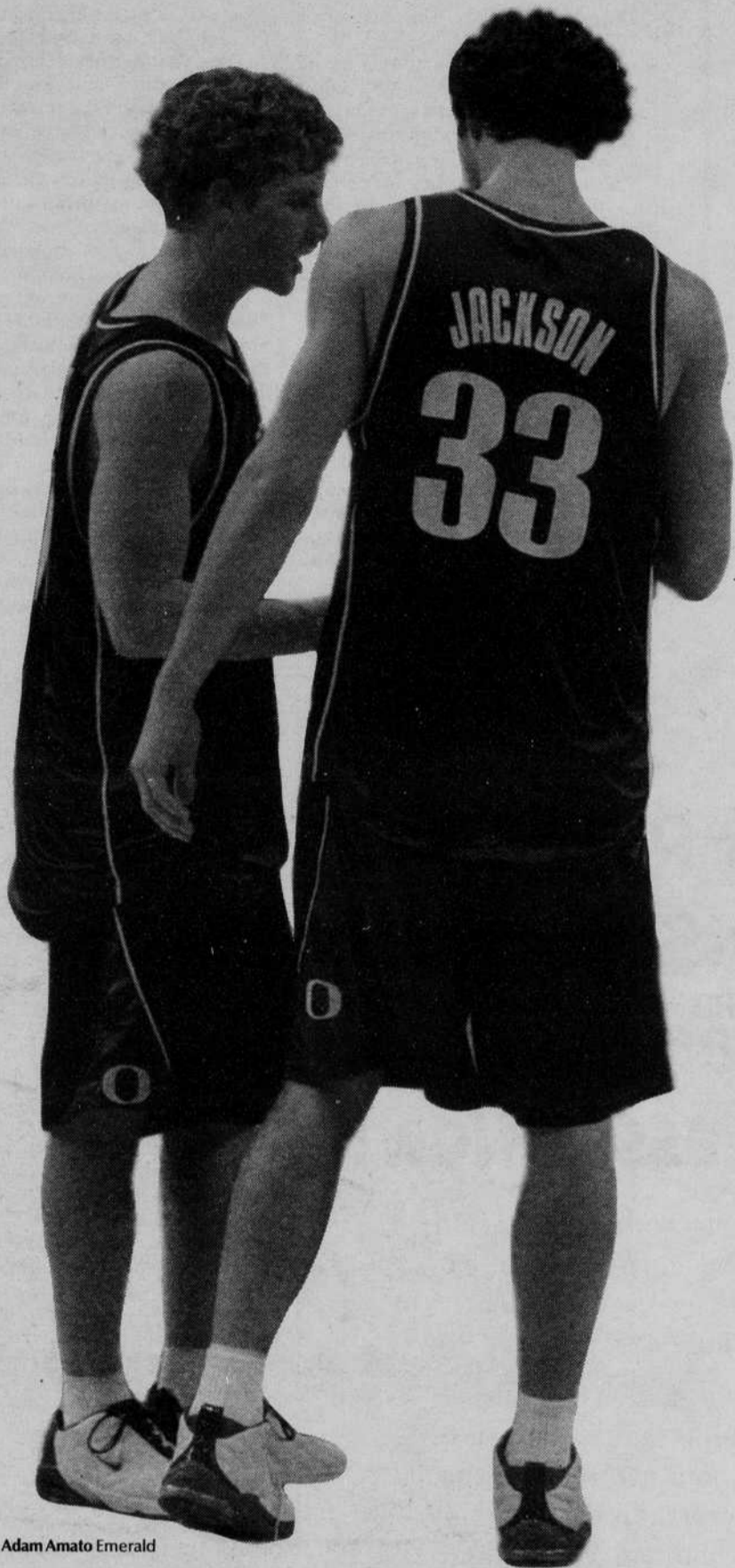


Thursday, April 3, 2003

Is there life without Lukes?



Adam Amato Emerald

After a year when the Ducks' expectations fell short, Oregon faces an unknown future as its stars consider entering the 2003 NBA Draft

Men's basketball

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

Ernie Kent will be at the Final Four this weekend in New Orleans. Kent sits on the board of directors for the National Association of Basketball Coaches, which holds its annual meetings at the Final Four.

Luke Ridnour and Luke Jackson won't be there with Kent. The Oregon team won't be there.

The Ducks came one step short of the Final Four last season. This year, Oregon came four very large steps away, and the Ducks were left to wonder how that walk through The Dance could have turned out.

"We were a good enough team to win some games in the (NCAA) tournament, and we didn't get it done," Kent said.

The list of accomplishments for Oregon this year was long. The Ducks beat Kansas in the preseason. They won the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament. Ridnour was named Pac-10 Player of the Year, and Jackson was named to the All Pac-10 Team.

But this year's Oregon team will be remembered more for its 60-58 first-round NCAA Tournament loss to Utah on March 21. And that will fuel next year's fire.

"It should motivate them," Kent said. "Finishing fifth (in the Pac-10) should motivate them, even though we won the Pac-10 Tournament. Winning the Pac-10 Tournament told me we were one of the best teams in the Pac-10."

So what about next year? So far, Kent has two plans. Plan "A" assumes juniors Ridnour and Jackson, who are both considering making the leap to the NBA, will return next year.

Plan "B" assumes they won't.

"If you get to plan 'B,' you execute plan 'B,'" Kent said. "For right now, we get ready like they're coming back."

Ridnour and Jackson were in Mexico until recently, and Kent said it could be "a month to two months" before they make

their decisions on whether or not to declare for the NBA Draft. The deadline for underclassmen to declare is May 11.

So for now, Kent can only look at the players he knows are coming back. And after a tough year, he thinks those players will come back with a hunger to win.

"We have the makings of a really good team, with the opportunity to come back and do it again next year, if everybody returns and everybody grows the way they should grow this spring and summer," Kent said.

Kent wants Ian Crosswhite and Matt Short to grow in size. He wants Adam Zahn and Jordan Kent, who both redshirted this season, to improve their shooting abilities. He wants Andre Joseph and James Davis to grow as leaders. And he wants all that to help the Ducks grow into more NCAA Tournament wins.

"The growth this year, the Pac-10 Tournament Championship, making it back to the NCAA Tournament, was all positive growth for this team," Kent said.

Then there's the recruits, the seeds who will be planted into the Oregon program when they arrive on campus next fall. Seattle's Aaron Brooks is the most touted prospect for the Ducks. Brooks scored 18 points in Monday's EA Sports Roundball Classic. Kent said he's also excited about the additions of recruits Ray Schafer and Mitch Platt, both post players.

"You've got three players, that's a pretty strong recruiting class coming in the door," Kent said. "On paper, this is a big team, a very deep team."

When Kent landed Brooks, it was a direct result of his experience coaching the USA Basketball Junior World Championships Team, a team that Brooks played for. After his trip to New Orleans, Kent will hit the recruiting trail again, then hit his most important recruiting pool: The 2003 Junior World Basketball Championships in Malaysia, July 10-20.

"(My focus) is shifting to USA Basketball and recruiting," Kent said.

Kent has been able to land top recruiting classes in recent years, and he says that when players like Jackson and Ridnour consider leaving early, it's only a reflection of how high the Oregon program has risen.

Turn to **Basketball**, page 12

Lorenzo in top 3 after first day of first '03 decathlon

The star notches two personal bests on his way to a third-place finish at the Texas Relays in Austin, Texas

Track and field

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

Santiago Lorenzo has been there before, done that before. But this time, it's so very different.

In his first full decathlon since sitting out the 2002 season with a quadriceps injury, Lorenzo was third overall after the first day of the decathlon at the Texas Relays in Austin, Texas, with some of his best events still to come today. Lorenzo won the Texas Relays decathlon in 2001 on his way to the NCAA title in the multi-event competition.

Turn to **Track**, page 13

Rollercoaster ends for wrestlers

The Duck wrestling squad finishes the season in the top half of the Pac-10, and earns an 8-11 overall dual meet record

Wrestling

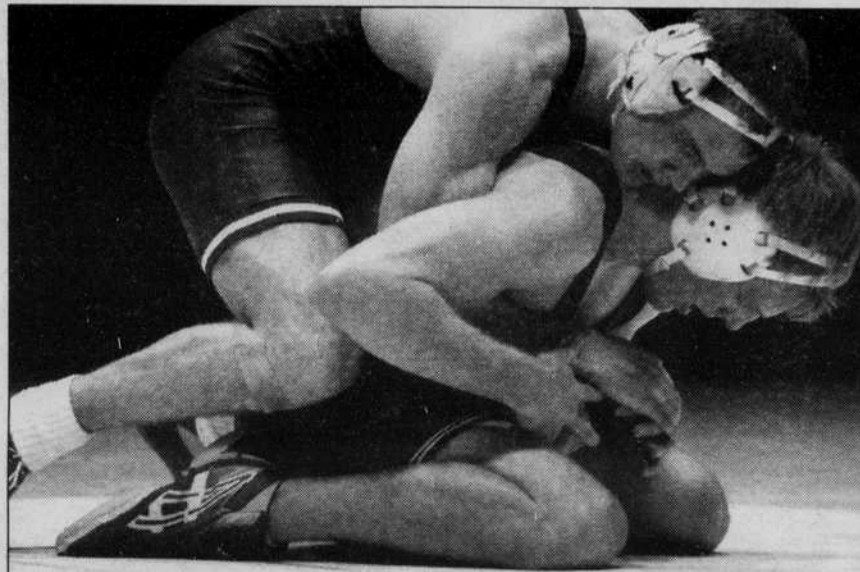
Mindi Rice
Sports Reporter

It's finally slowed down.

The Oregon wrestling squad rode a rollercoaster this season, and with the NCAA Championships two weeks past, the Ducks now have time to settle back into the offseason.

After losing one of the team's top wrestlers to injury in the team's first tournament, then almost upsetting the No. 3 team in the country two months later, the Ducks showed

Turn to **Wrestling**, page 14



Adam Amato Emerald

Shane Webster (top) was the only Duck to finish as an All-American at the national tournament.