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Softball readies for Howe home opener

Oregon faces Portland State today at 2 p.m. in the first of two doubleheaders between the teams this season

Softball

Mindi Rice
Sports Reporter

Oregon finally has come home.

The Ducks (18-11 overall, 2-5 Pacific-10 Conference) kick off their home season today against Portland State — in a doubleheader that begins at 2 p.m. — for the first two games of 14 the softball squad will play at home during the next month.

No. 20 Oregon's only out-of-town breaks will be a doubleheader at Portland State next week and a Washington/UCLA road trip in early May.

But first, the team must deal with Portland State.

"Portland State always plays Oregon tough," head coach Kathy Arendsen said earlier this season. "I expect a battle."

The Vikings (11-15 overall, 3-1 Pacific Coast Softball Conference) are coming out of a two-day, four-game trip to San Diego, where they split Saturday's doubleheader and swept San Diego on Sunday.

Portland State opened the season going 1-4 in each of its first two preseason tournaments before the team split its four games in the Tulsa Invitational.

Since then, the Vikings have played six doubleheaders — including the two in San Diego — sweeping three, being swept in two and splitting one.

"We have a win against Oregon State," Arendsen said. "If we can beat Portland State in this series then at least we're ahead in the state championship."

"They're a dangerous team, well coached, talented."

The Vikings' coach, Teri Mariani, is in her 27th year as head coach at Portland State. She has spent 31 consecutive years as a Viking — as student,

athlete, coach or administrator.

Mariani brought Portland State's softball program into Division I for the first time five years ago. The Vikings have only been a member of a conference for four seasons — three in the Western Athletic Conference and currently in the PCSC.

The Ducks — a member of the Pac-10 for softball since the league added the sport in 1987 — will try to break their two-game losing streak after being swept at California.

Oregon took a three-game losing streak into Friday's game at then-No. 12 Stanford.

The Ducks and Cardinal stretched out a 10-inning, 2 hour, 50 minute game into a pitcher's duel after the teams deadlocked at two runs each in the second inning. Oregon eventually pulled out the 3-2 win.

Junior catcher Jenn Poore scored the winning run in the top of the 10th on a two-out single by senior first baseman Alyssa Laux. Poore also hit her first home run of the season — a two-run shot to left field — in the second for Oregon's two runs in the second inning.

The Ducks faced California twice — once on Saturday and once on Sunday — to continue the Pac-10 road trip.

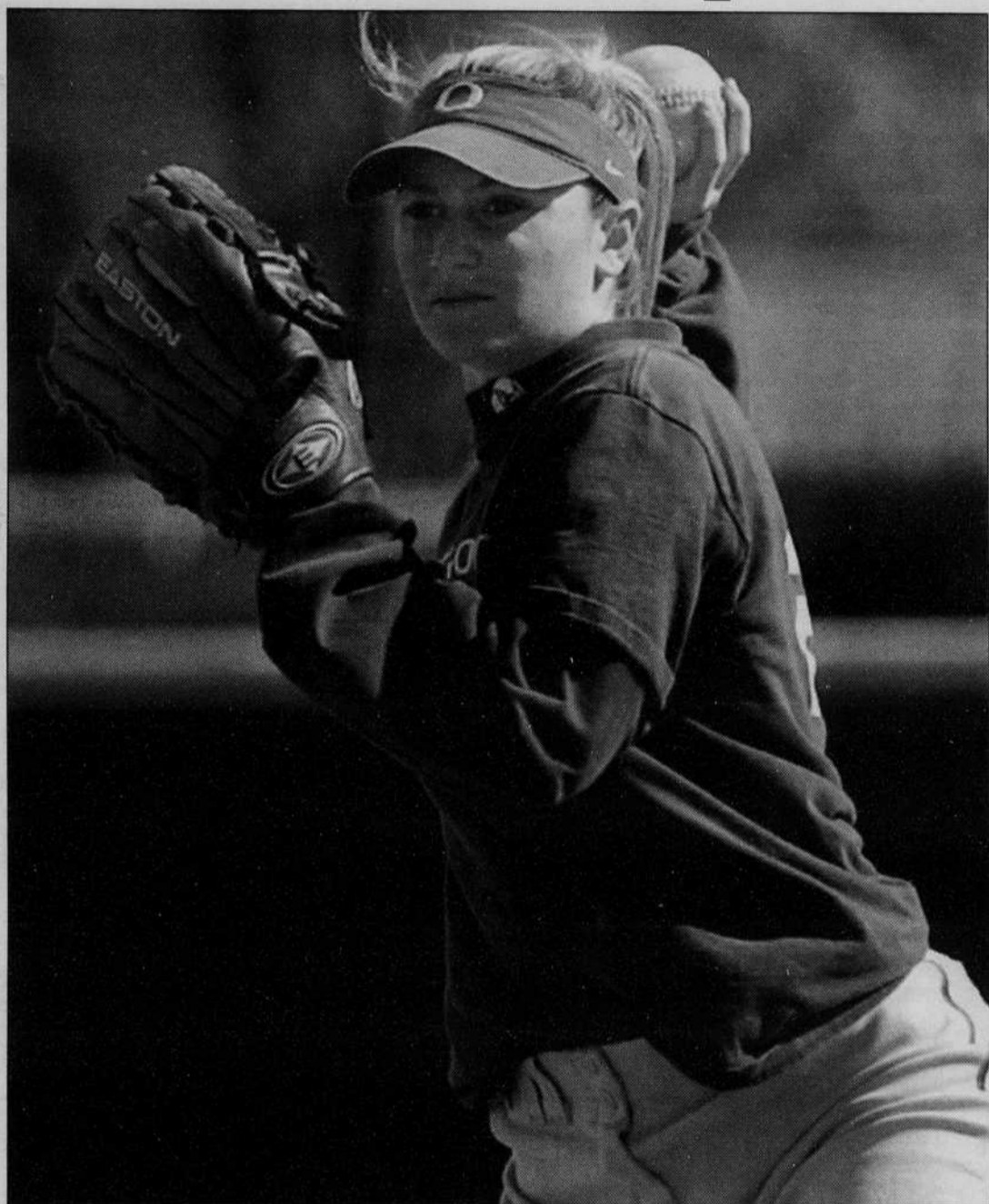
Oregon was shut out by then-No. 7 California — the defending national champions — on Saturday with a 4-0 loss. The Ducks only managed two hits in the game.

The Ducks lost again to the Bears on Sunday, 4-1, avoiding being held scoreless in two-straight games. Oregon has scored at least one run in five of its 11 losses this season.

While Oregon is in the midst of its season, assistant coach Mike White was named the Men's Amateur Softball Association Player of the Year on Monday.

"It's a great honor, especially with all of the other great players," White said. "It's something that I love doing so to be honored this way is a great feeling."

White led the Frontier Players Casino team to the ASA Men's Major Fast Pitch

Turn to **Softball**, page 8

Adam Amato Emerald

Freshman shortstop Breanne Sabol is the only Oregon player who has started all 29 games, as well as the only Duck to start at the same position in each game. Sabol is one of four Ducks who is perfect in steal attempts.

New UO hurdler runs with speed

Freshman Eric Mitchum has already run a sub 14-second time in the 110 hurdles, only the second such Duck time since 1991

Men's track and field notes

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

Even in the photo-finish picture, which is stretched and tweaked to make sure the winner is clear, it looks like Duck freshman Eric Mitchum beat Arkansas' Eddie Jackson to the finish line in their 110 hurdles heat at last weekend's Texas Relays.

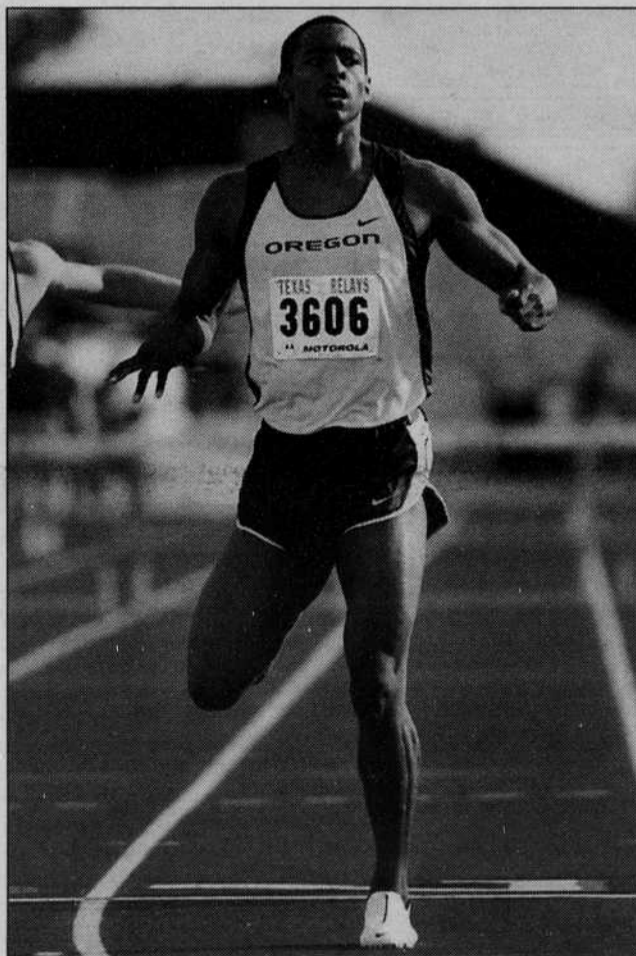
But Mitchum lost to Jackson, the official separation time only .01 second.

No matter for Mitchum. He advanced to Saturday's final, which he ran in 13.98 seconds, just the second sub 14-second 110 hurdles race for Oregon since 1991.

"It was the best meet I've ever been to," Mitchum said of the Texas Relays. "Just the crowds, the competition, the whole environment."

While Mitchum is excited to be running well in his first collegiate season, the Ducks are excited to have a short-distance hurdling talent to immediately replace Micah Harris, who graduated last year as the best 110-meter hurdler in Oregon history.

In only two meets this year, Mitchum has proved that he is a viable replacement for Harris. He ran an NCAA-regional-qualifying 14.07 in the Oregon Preview two weeks ago, and

Turn to **Track**, page 8

Geoff Thurner Emerald

Eric Mitchum ran a 13.98 in the finals at the Texas Relays on Saturday.

Lost in shuffle, quarterbacks transfer to LB

Andy Collins and Scott Vossmeier look to make contributions next season at linebacker

Spring football notes

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

College football players will often go through position changes during spring practices.

To see a defensive lineman move to the offensive side of the ball is not uncommon. Same goes for running backs, wide receivers and members of the secondary.

Quarterbacks moving to linebacker is usually a bit more of stretch. In the case of former Oregon quarterbacks Andy Collins and Scott Vossmeier, it is a real possibility.

With Kellen Clemens and Jason Fife returning to the position and three recruits expected to round out the roster as late as winter next year, Collins and Vossmeier were getting lost in the jumble.

So now, the duo is making a jump to the defense, not exactly a breeding ground for former quarterbacks.

"It's been kind of tough getting the whole different mindset from offense to defense," Collins said. "So far it's going all right, I just have to learn the defense."

Turn to **Football**, page 12