

Softball's success rivals 2000 season

The Ducks are in the middle of one of their best seasons ever with two weeks left

Softball notes

Mindi Rice
Sports Reporter

No. 19 Oregon is making a mark on the Pacific-10 Conference.

After two consecutive seasons in last place in the Pac-10, the Ducks have tied their conference win record from the 2000 season — Oregon's last season in the NCAA Regional Tournament.

When the Ducks swept Arizona State at Howe Field on Saturday and Sunday, they were the first consecutive conference wins at home for Oregon since 1998. The last time the Ducks won back-to-back games against Arizona State was 1999.

Oregon is doing the little things to help it win this season. After only 20 stolen bases in the 2002 season, the Ducks have 43 steals with six games left in the regular season.

Seniors Amber Hutchison and Alyssa Laux lead the team in steals with 11 stolen bases each. Both sur-

passed their stolen base totals from their three previous seasons combined: Hutchison with nine and Laux with 10.

With senior Andrea Vidlund's two saves against Arizona State, the Ducks have 12 saves on the season, which ties the Pac-10 single-season record for saves by a team.

The Ducks have also been hitting home runs with force this season. Vidlund's leadoff home run Sunday marked Oregon's 28th home run of the season — the same number the Ducks hit during the entire 2002 season. Vidlund leads Oregon with nine, with eight coming in the past 15 games. Laux, junior Jenn Poore and freshman Beth Boskovich are tied for second with three each.

Ranking Oregon

The Ducks picked up their best ranking of the season Tuesday in USA Softball/ESPN.com's Top 25 at No. 19. In Tuesday's NFCA/USA Today poll, Oregon improved from No. 23 to No. 21.

Dominating the Top 25

The Pac-10 leader, Arizona (45-4, 14-1), is again ranked No. 1 nationally in both the NFCA/USA Today and USA Softball/ESPN.com polls.

The Wildcats' one conference loss was to Stanford.

UCLA (39-5, 11-3) remains at No. 2 in both polls as well as second in the conference. No. 6/9 California (39-14, 8-7), third in the Pac-10, and No. 4/5 Washington (40-9-1, 7-7), fourth in the Pac-10, split a pair of games Saturday and Sunday.

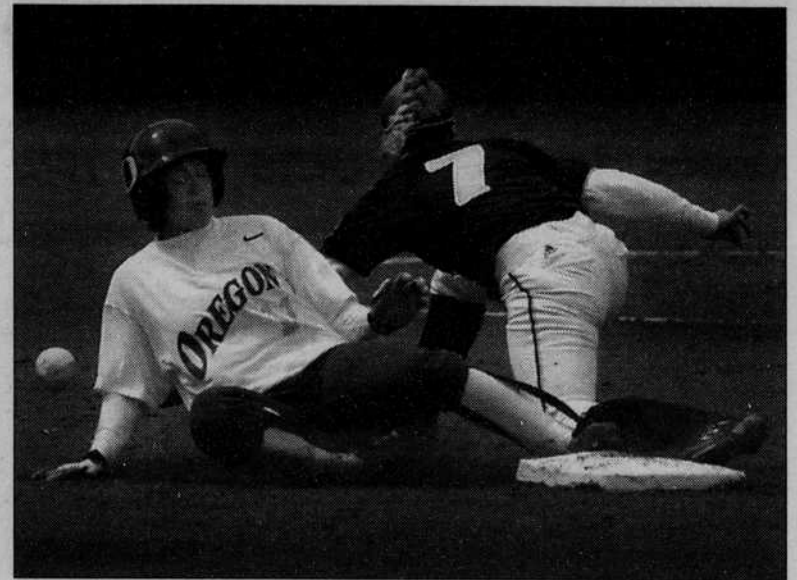
Oregon made its biggest gain of the season with two wins on the weekend, moving up to fifth in the Pac-10. The Ducks are fifth for the first time this season.

No. 12/15 Stanford (35-20, 5-10) is one game behind the Ducks, tied with No. 15/16 Arizona State (28-19, 5-10).

Oregon State continues its trend as the only Pac-10 team not appearing in either top 25 poll. The Beavers, who took a game from Arizona State on Friday before losing twice to Arizona, did receive votes in both polls. Unofficially, they are ranked at No. 26 and 30.

Pac-10 weekly honors

Arizona pitcher Alicia Hollowell won her fourth Pac-10 Pitcher of the Week award on Monday, giving Arizona seven individual award winners, Pitcher of the Week or Player of the Week, for the season.



Adam Amato Emerald

Amber Hutchison and the Ducks are in the middle of their best season in a while.

Only three separate Wildcats have actually won the awards.

Oregon and UCLA also have three players who have been honored at least once this season. Arizona State and Washington have each split three awards between two players.

Two Stanford pitchers have been honored, while two Oregon State players have also been honored. California is the only school not to have a player or pitcher earn the award this season.

Contact the sports reporter at mindirice@dailymerald.com.

Track

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Javelin pointing differently

Adam Jenkins isn't John Stiegeler, but he's sure been throwing like the former javelin champion these days.

Jenkins used a personal best Saturday at the Oregon Invitational to move to the top of the Pac-10 rankings and earn Pac-10 Field Athlete of the Week honors. Jenkins posted a throw of 221 feet, 4 inches to finish second behind national leader Rob Minnitti of Boise State at the Invitational.

Jump like a freshman

The old Ducks weren't exactly moldy with age, but the new Oregon high jumpers were ripe and fresh at

the Invite on Saturday.

With the graduation of stars Jason Boness and Kyle Johnson last season, the future looked bleak for the high jump crew. But with Boness and Johnson in attendance and competing Saturday, freshman Chad Clason popped a Pac-10 and regional-qualifying height to give Duck fans hope for the future of the jump.

Clason jumped 6-10 3/4 and currently ranks seventh on the Pac-10 list just three weeks out from the conference meet. Fellow freshman Jeff Lindsey isn't too far behind; he's jumped 6-6 3/4 and sits just outside the list of Pac-10 qualifiers.

Rank and file

The Oregon track teams can't seem to catch a break — or a big mark — to move up in the national rankings. The Ducks both sit at 14th in

Trackwire.com's weekly rankings. The Web site takes teams' best marks and scores the national meet based on those marks.

The men sit all alone in 14th in their poll, while the women are in a three-way tie on their side of things. Both teams would score 18 points at the season-ending meet, according to the rankings.

The Ducks still aren't on the board at www.team-power.org, which allows the user to match teams against each other and see who wins. But some other Pac-10 powers are listed, and according to the site, the Pac-10 Championships should be a heck of a battle between UCLA and Arizona. The Bruins, ranked No. 19 by Trackwire, would edge the unranked Wildcats, 125-78.

Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailymerald.com.

Golf

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home courses in the biggest tournament of the year for any of the teams involved.

The Bruins' closest competitor is the No. 6 Arizona Wildcats. However, UCLA would need a major meltdown to lose its 23 stroke lead heading into today's fourth and final round. Stanford sits in third place, followed by No. 20 Washington and No. 16 Arizona State.

The Sun Devils recently won six-straight Pac-10 titles, a streak dating from 1995 to 2000. The Oregon State Beavers leapfrogged the Ducks in the standings, outshooting Oregon by five strokes to take a three-

stroke lead into today's finale.

Oregon is in a position to finish no worse than seventh overall, as the team currently holds a 13-stroke lead over its nearest competitor, the California Golden Bears.

Leading the field individually is UCLA's John Merrick and Stanford's Jim Seki, both with 3-under 213s. Oregon State's Cameron MacKenzie gave up the tournament lead Tuesday and now sits one stroke behind the co-leaders.

Oregon wraps up the Pac-10 Championships today, hoping to solidify a bid to the NCAA West Regional May 15-17 in Seattle.

Scott Archer is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (April 30). The pressure you've been under should soon begin to ease. You'll find that your experience has grown. Something that used to be upsetting has become routine and has actually made you stronger. Start taking on new challenges.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) _ Today is a 7 _ You'd rather do innovative financial planning than spend all day counting beans. Unfortunately, the latter is required first. Count those beans now.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) _ Today is a 7 _ Finish the tasks you've been worried about. Get them out of the way, and do a good job on them. There's a test coming tomorrow.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) _ Today is a 6 _ Review your travel plans again. The more potential problems you can negotiate now, the more fun you'll have this weekend.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) _ Today is an 8 _ Once you have your routine down, the job gets a lot easier. Establish your basic structure now, with input from wise friends.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) _ Today is a 6 _ Next week it starts getting easier for you to be in control. Meanwhile, renew old alliances, and don't argue with the boss.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) _ Today is a 7 _ Don't squander your money, even if

you feel flush. The more you save now, the more you'll have to spend this weekend on fun and games.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) _ Today is a 5 _ If you can stand to be frugal just a little while longer, you'll be glad you did. If you must buy a treat for yourself or a loved one, take time to find the best deal.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) _ Today is a 7 _ You may have to rely on a partner to get your meaning across. By now, you and this other person should be on the same wavelength. If not, make adjustments.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) _ Today is a 7 _ Play by the rules and get the job done. Offer encouragement to those who are stuck. Be patient. Victory may not come until next week.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) _ Today is an 8 _ Did you know that Capricorn is the sign of going from rags to riches? Hardships make you stronger, and you eventually succeed. So take heart, no matter where you are within the process.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) _ Today is a 6 _ You've made your move, you've taken your stand, and now you can settle down. Work out the kinks in your new routine. Make yourself comfortable.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) _ Today is a 7 _ You're pretty good at "putting up with," but fixing the problem is better. It's time to hit the books again. And this time, be more patient.

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