

SPORTS

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Best bet
NHL Playoffs:
New Jersey at Ottawa, Game 7
4 p.m., ESPN

Friday, May 23, 2003

Prefontaine's legend lives through time

I remember the first time I heard about Steve Prefontaine.

Like a true child of the Multiplex Era (sort of like the Mesozoic Era or the Paleozoic Era, only with better television shows), I learned about Prefontaine through the wonderful world of Disney.

It was sixth grade. I was putting on a pair of track spikes for the first and almost last time, for a P.E. class at my California middle school. A tall, lanky kid, who was about to beat me by about 30 meters in the 100-meter dash, struck up a conversation.



Peter Hockaday
Two minutes for crosschecking

"Hey," he said. "Ever heard of Steve Prefontaine?"

"Uh, no," I said, having one of those sixth-grade moments where I felt completely and utterly worthless for not knowing who this Prefontaine was.

"Who's that?"
"He's this cool runner guy from up in Oregon. He was really fast and stuff, then he got in a car crash and died while he was still real young. I just saw the movie 'bout it."

That's how we — the children of the post-Pre age — all start our relationship with the legend, isn't it? Pre transcends all time and all places.

He was really fast and stuff.

We fill in the details. He held tons of American records and virtually all of Oregon's distance records. He made the cover of Sports Illustrated. He was Nike's first Michael Jordan when the company was birthed at Hayward Field. He stood up for athletes' rights and helped start the reform movement that led to professional athletes in the Olympics.

Then he got in a car crash and died. While he was still real young.

Every year before this Prefontaine Classic meet, I dip into the Emerald archives, back to June 2, 1975. The words of Emerald writer Dave Bushnell always send chills up my spine and through my head and across my face.

"The legendary feats of Steve Prefontaine will be no more, but the legend of the man lives on."

"Not only was the shock of Pre's death early Friday in the hills of eastern Eugene felt in Oregon, but waves of disbelief carried throughout the country and the world."

"While the Eugene community was sleeping, totally unaware of the fate which its most famous citizen had met, the East Coast was awakening to the news of Pre's death. A phone rang at the apartment of a University of Oregon student — it was a friend from Massachusetts calling to find out if the news was true. Another student received an early morning call from a friend in New York, inquiring about the same subject."

The closing line of that story is this:

"How much he accomplished in five years. How much he could have accomplished in future years is left to speculation. We must be content with what he gave us."

Now I'm left without my own words.

All I have is stories. So I'll tell one more. Yesterday, I ran to Pre's Rock. I sort of ran. Ten years after I learned about Pre, I'm still not a runner. So I stopped for a long time at that rock, examined the famous inscription, "Pre 5-30-75 R.I.P."

There were track bib numbers

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Just ducky

The Oregon softball team rose to unexpected heights and broke UO records by playing together instead of apart

Softball

Mindi Rice
Sports Reporter

Forget the superstars. Ignore the hotshots. Never mind those who say "it's-all-about-me."

The team that plays together wins together.

The 2003 Oregon softball squad is proof.

A unanimous choice by Pacific-10 Conference coaches to finish last in the conference, the Ducks made a surprise run to finish tied for third in the Pac-10.

"What a tremendous season," head coach Kathy Arendsen said after Oregon's final game Sunday. "This team fought until the very end and always found ways to put ourselves in a position to win."

The Ducks' 10 wins in Pac-10 play are the most since the 1999 squad won 10 conference games — out of 29 Pac-10 matchups as compared to 21 this season.

The Ducks also set a new Pac-10 record for saves. Pitchers Andrea Vidlund and Amy Harris combined for 17 saves during the season.

Oregon led the conference in sacrifice bunts this season with 54 — 11 more than Washington and Stanford, who finished second in the conference.

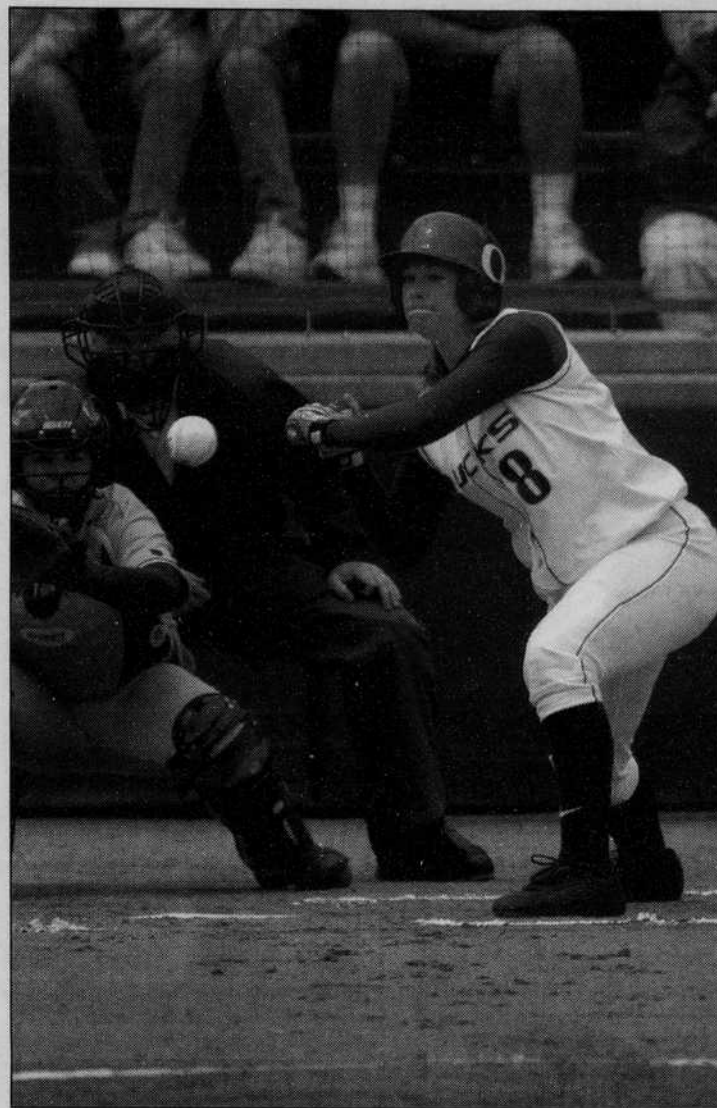
However, working as a team doesn't mean there aren't stand-out players. Each Oregon starter contributed in some way to the Ducks' winning season.

Vidlund, who earned third-team All-American honors Thursday, broke two Oregon single-season records and one career record in her final year. She is the first Oregon player named as an All-American since 1991.

In the Ducks' final win of the season — a 9-2 showdown with Louisiana-Lafayette — Vidlund hit home runs No. 15 and 16 to set a new single-season Oregon home run record. It also gave Vidlund 37 for her career, to move her to the No. 1 spot on the all-time home run list.

Vidlund, who started 48 games, primarily in left field, also held the role of closer for the Ducks. She set another Oregon record with 11 saves.

Harris, the ace of the pitching staff, struck out a single-season-record 180 batters in her first season as a Duck. Harris had a 1.97



Mark McCambridge Emerald

Andrea Vidlund, an All-American, set the Duck record for career home runs.

earned run average on the season, the second lowest ERA at Oregon since Kim Campfer's 0.80 ERA in 1994.

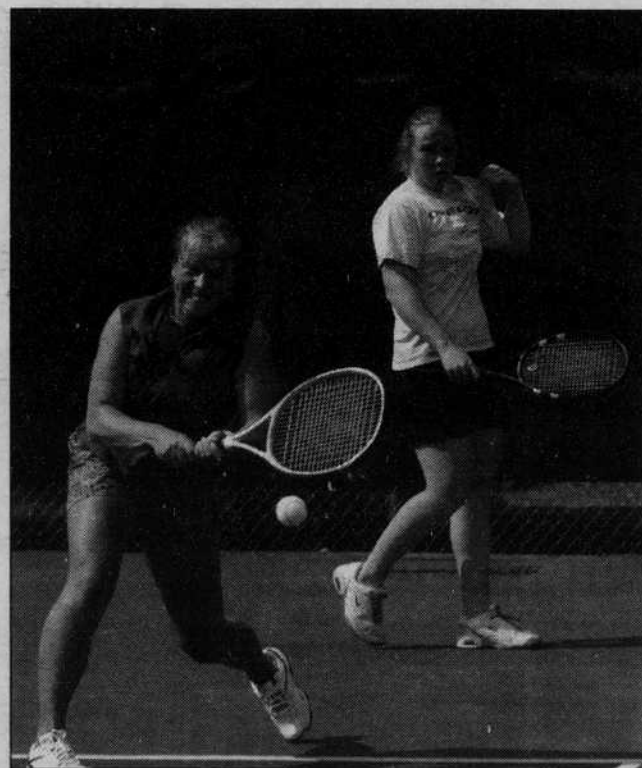
She finished third in the Pac-10 with six saves, and seventh with her total strikeouts.

Utility player Amber Hutchison finished third in the Pac-10 with 19 stolen bases on the season. She finishes her Duck career at eighth on the all-time steals list.

Shortstop Breanne Sabol was Oregon's only player to start all 56 games during the season. She and second baseman Erin Goodell combined for 20 double plays — good for third in the conference in double plays.

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Season ends for Panova and Nagle



Adam Amato Emerald

Daria Panova (left) and Courtney Nagle (right) advanced to the final 16 at the NCAA Tournament, but fell to a Virginia Commonwealth duo.

The Duck duo is knocked out at the NCAA Championships, but Daria Panova earns special recognition for her special season

Tennis

Ryan Heath
Freelance Sports Reporter

A year that began for Oregon women's tennis in October with preseason individual tournaments came to a close yesterday with All-American honors for Duck junior Courtney Nagle and sophomore Daria Panova.

The duo closed out the year with a loss in the doubles quarterfinals of the NCAA Tournament in Gainesville, Fla.

"They have absolutely nothing to hang their heads about," head coach Nils Schyllander said. "They should be very proud of what they accomplished this year."

The Ducks battled Virginia Commonwealth's Silvia Urickova and Barbara Zahnova for a chance at the Final Four, but fell, 6-2, 6-2, in a match that lasted a little less than an hour and a half.

"I think we just made a few too many mistakes," Nagle said in an interview

with gatorzone.com. "They were pretty solid — they didn't miss much."

Urickova and Zahnova knew the road to the semifinals would not be easy, but they had faith in their strategy.

"The key is to stay aggressive," Urickova said. "The return is key always, and a good serve."

No. 33 Nagle and Panova battled the Virginia Commonwealth duo earlier in the year, but the result was the same.

"We'd beaten (Nagle and Panova) already this season, so we were confident," Urickova said.

The earlier match was in the regular season pro-set form, and the Rams duo took it, 8-3.

"(Urickova and Zahnova) weren't too flashy," Nagle said. "At key times, I think we made easy volley errors or we'd get up in a game, and we wouldn't close it out. I think that made a big difference because we weren't able to put enough pressure on them throughout the match by making those key points."

The Rams move on to the Final Four and will take on California's Christina Fusano and Raquel Kops-Jones. Fusano and Kops-Jones knocked out No. 2 Agata

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