

SPORTS

Best bet
NCAA basketball:
Illinois vs. North Carolina
6 p.m., ESPN

Tuesday, December 2, 2003

Hank Hager
Behind the dishIncidents
unfairly put
coaches
under gun

There used to be a time when a coach needed a losing season to warrant a pink slip.

There used to be a time when university officials had to get permission to talk to a coach under contract with a different program.

There used to be a time when collegiate athletics had an innocence about it, a time when the games were more important than the politics that are currently being bandied about.

Welcome to the real world. Welcome to the NCAA, circa 2003.

Frank Solich was canned by Nebraska over the weekend, just days after a convincing defeat of Colorado. The firing came after a 9-3 record and a potential trip to the Holiday Bowl for the Cornhuskers.

The reasoning? Oh, the program wasn't going in the right direction, just two years after Nebraska battled for the national championship at the Rose Bowl.

"We're not a win-at-all costs program," Nebraska athletics director Steve Pederson told The Washington Post Monday. "But the by-product of excellence in every facet of your program is winning. I don't apologize for having high expectations. I think high expectations are a part of a great university. The most disappointing thing you can ever deal with are no expectations."

What does Pederson want? Does he expect the program to win 10 games every year, especially playing in an outdated offense — the option — that proves to be less and less successful every year? That's not Solich's fault. It's the 1980s any more. No team can dominate like Nebraska once did.

Anyone who thinks that is either too jaded or has been sitting under a rock for the past 10 years.

The collegiate game is adding parity every season. How else can anyone explain that only a handful of teams can escape every season with less than two losses?

The bar in Nebraska has been set too high for the modern game, a time where a nine-win season is an accomplishment.

It's too bad Solich paid with his livelihood for a program that seems to think much too highly of itself.

Note to new Nebraska head coach: Get rid of the option offense and don't read the newspapers in Lincoln.

Then there's the Tommy Tuberville situation, the one at Auburn that seems so laughable, so embarrassing, that Tiger officials were probably wishing by now that it were just a bad nightmare.

The skinny of the situation is that school president William Walker and athletics director David Housel met with Louisville coach Bobby Petrino secretly, telling no one, including Louisville's brass. Their intention: Bring Petrino into the fold, replacing Tuberville.

Naturally, word got out of the secret rendezvous, and suffice to say, Walker and Housel were apologetic. Apologetic, though, to the point that either could lose his job? Probably not, but both should

Turn to **HAGER**, page 6'Anxiety' builds
when Oregon
faces Vikings

After a 10-day break from action, Oregon is ready and excited to face the Big Sky's Portland State tonight at McArthur Court.

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

For the Oregon men's basketball team, a 10-day break doesn't necessarily mean rustiness.

It has only made the team that much better.

For the past 10 days — since Oregon's 80-67 win over Fresno State on Nov. 21 — the Ducks have corrected all their problems.

**MEN'S
BASKETBALL**

"We've taken 10 days and broken down what we need to get better at," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said.

"We've gotten what I think a lot of coaches over the course of the next couple weeks would love to have."

But now the Ducks have become antsy. They want the chance to compete again. Tonight, the Ducks (1-0) face Portland State (1-1) at McArthur Court at 7 p.m. The game will be televised on the Oregon Sports Network.

"I see it as another opportunity to show the things that we can do," sophomore guard Brandon Lincoln said. "We've been anxious to play games and play against other people because we're sick of beating up on each other in practice."

Kent said Oregon has focused on full-court pressure, working in the half-court on transition and in zone defense. And, of course, the Ducks have focused on shooting better, mainly from the free-throw line.

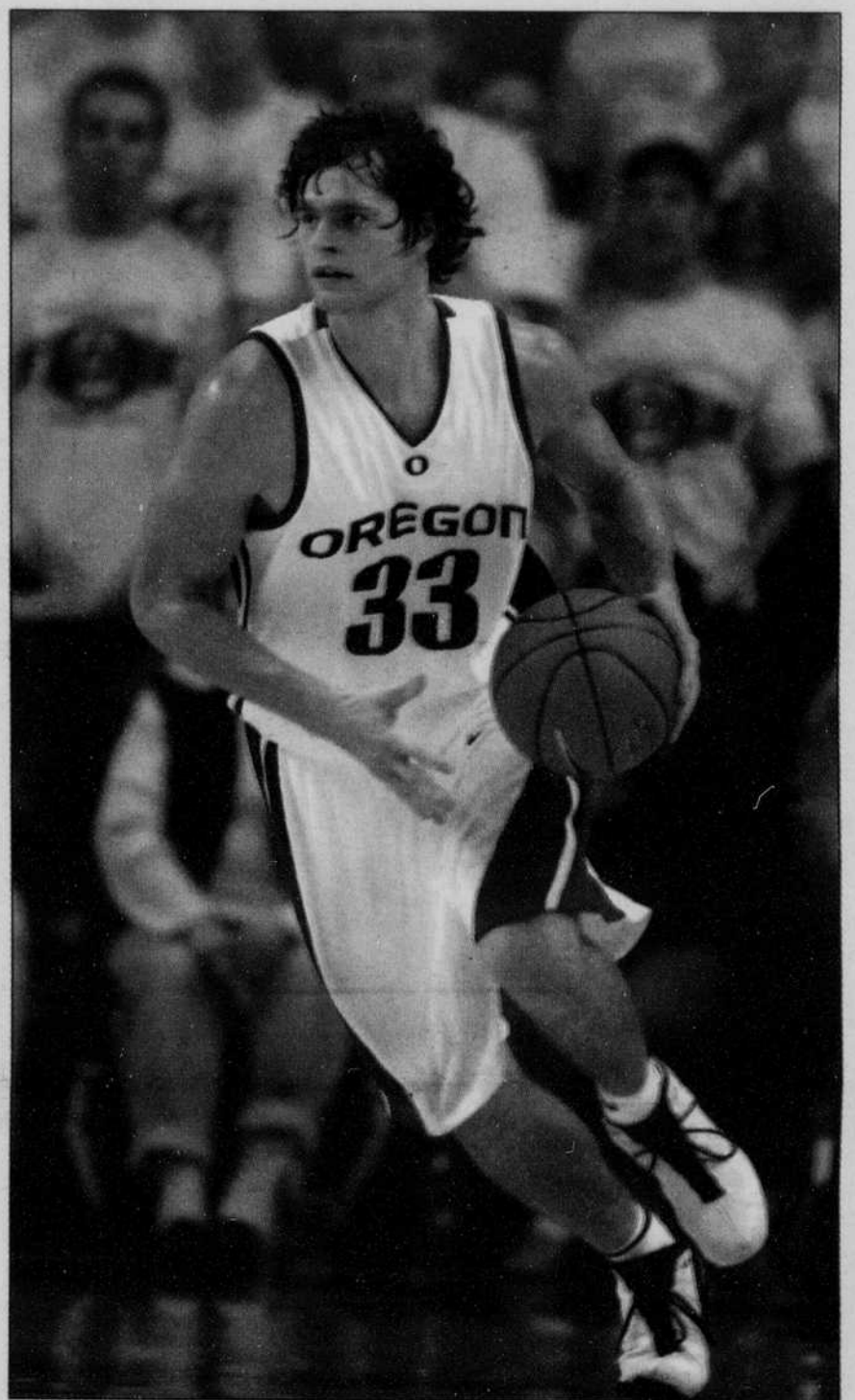
But is Oregon ready for tonight?

"I hope they are; I know I am as a coach," Kent said. "I hope that same anxiety is with them because that's a good thing if it's there. And it should be there. They should be ready to play and should be tired of practicing against each other."

The Ducks lead the series, 5-1. Oregon has won the last four straight, including a 69-63 win last year at Memorial Coliseum. Portland State's only win in the series came in the 1997-98 season, a 56-54 triumph at McArthur Court.

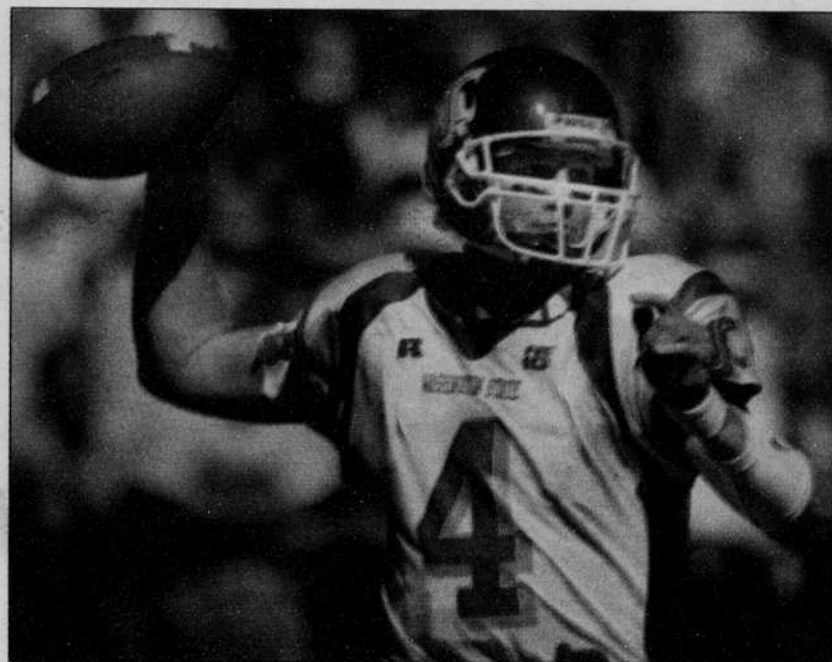
The Vikings have split their openers, losing to Washington and beating Southern Oregon. Portland State is led by guard Blake Walker, who is averaging 18.5 points per game, and center Seamus Boxley, who is averaging a double-double (13.5 ppg, 10.5 rpg) per game.

Boxley redshirted last season because of a hand injury.

Turn to **BASKETBALL**, page 6

Adam Amato Photo Editor

Oregon senior Luke Jackson and the Ducks play their first game in 10 days when they host Portland State tonight at McArthur Court. The Ducks beat Fresno State on Nov. 21 to open the season.

Washington State nabs Holiday Bowl,
USC remains second in BCS rankings

Mark McCambridge Photographer

Senior quarterback Matt Kegel and the Cougars are going to their third-consecutive bowl game. They accepted an invitation to the Dec. 30 Holiday Bowl in San Diego.

The Cougars are officially headed for a San Diego vacation with a spot in the Holiday Bowl

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

When the Bowl Championship Series poll was released on Monday, USC held firm at No. 2 while Washington State dropped even further from the top 12 to a No. 16 ranking.

Monday's poll cleared the way for Holiday Bowl President Pete Hedley to officially invite the Cougars to the Dec. 30 San Diego-based bowl game.

"The Pacific Life Holiday Bowl looks forward to welcoming the Cougars and their great fans to San Diego," Hedley said Monday. "They're an exciting team and a perfect fit for San Diego's Bowl Classic."

Washington State will face the No. 3 team from the Big 12 Conference, which will be announced Dec. 7 when BCS bowl standings come out. It was also announced Monday that California will face Virginia Tech in the Insight Bowl. Unofficially, that leaves Oregon as the Pac-10's Sun Bowl representative.

Although the Cougars ended their season with a loss in the Apple Cup on Nov. 22, the team finished second in the Pacific-10 Conference with a 6-2 conference record and a 9-3 record overall.

"We are excited about the opportunity to play in the Pacific Life Holiday Bowl and are looking forward to bringing Cougar

Turn to **PAC-10**, page 6