

# Ducks hit road in search of season's first win

The Ducks anticipate a strong performance in Redmond this weekend in the Oregon Classic despite 0-3 record

**Scott Archer**  
Freelance Reporter

Gone is Oregon's tough nonconference schedule.

In are new expectations for a season nearly half gone.

## DUCK WRESTLING

the annual Oregon classic. But, as the

It's a precarious situation for the Oregon wrestlers this weekend as they travel to Redmond in

Ducks have said time and again, this won't be a down year.

If Oregon hopes to make some noise in the Pacific-10 Conference this year, there is no better opportunity or outlet to do it than this weekend's competition.

The Ducks enter the tournament with a 0-3 record on the year. What goes unnoticed, however, is the caliber of competition the Ducks have competed against during the season. Oregon has wrestled against No. 1 Oklahoma State and No. 5 Nebraska, along with a match against rival Oregon State.

The Ducks don't want to have to justify their record. They want results.

"We will be going out and performing and taking charge," head coach Chuck Kearney said. "(We are

going to) apply what we learned, and show up and compete. We want a take-charge attitude, we will look to see what happens."

Now is the time for the Ducks to take the hard knocks of 2003 and turn them into stepping stones for 2004. It is not an easy task, but with competition on the horizon — which doesn't include two top five teams nationally — things look a little easier.

"This month is the bulk of our season," redshirt sophomore Chet McBee said. "We are facing some good nonconference competition, especially Army."

Although the tournament will feature 11 teams, Oregon enters it facing only Air Force, Army and Cal State-Fullerton.

The Ducks are led by No. 20 Jason

Harless, who is 4-4 on the season.

Cal State-Fullerton is a Pac-10 wrestling team, and the two teams have met only once before at the respective tournament. Overall, Oregon has won the last four matches and has an overall record of 9-1 against the Titans.

While the Ducks are done facing top five teams, they aren't done wrestling against top five wrestlers. Such is the case with junior Leonel Sanchez of Cal State-Fullerton, whose 17-4 record has him ranked third in the nation in the 174-pound weight division.

Air Force enters the tournament with momentum after winning its dual meet against Utah Valley, 35-3. Oregon beat the Falcons when the met for the first and only time during

the 1981-1982 season when most of Oregon's wrestlers were either just being born or hadn't been born yet.

Rounding out the Ducks' competition this weekend is Army. It is the first time the teams will meet. Army features All-American Phillip Simpson in the 157-pound weight class.

Simpson is 11-1 this season, but more impressively, carries a career record of 85-12. Currently ranked No. 7 in his respective class, Simpson finished third in the nation a year ago.

"This will give some guys a chance to see up-and-coming teams in the Pac-10," McBee said. "I'm sure some are ranked ahead of us, but this isn't a down year."

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## CIVIL WAR

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confident heading into the first Civil War game of the season, even with the myriad injuries they've suffered so far this season.

"It's hard to get in a good rhythm with all your players as a team, especially when each guy is kind of going down week by week and you have to get a new set of players in there," Oregon forward Luke Jackson said. "But I think we've adjusted well and our players kind of adapt to that and accepted their roles pretty well as far as who's been down and who has to step up."

The Beavers are coming off a 91-82 loss at the hands of USC. Chris Stephens, who leads the Beavers with 15.8 per game, had 19 in the loss.

"He's definitely playing well," Oregon guard James Davis said. "I see that in his first two games. I don't know what his average is, but he shot the ball real well."

The Beavers match up well with Oregon on the perimeter, having made at least 30 percent of their three-point attempts in four of their last five games. Sophomore Lamar Hurd runs the offense and has started at the point guard position in each of the 40 games he's played in his career for Oregon State.

Hurd averages 4.4 assists per game, including a season-high eight in the Beavers' 82-80 loss to Boise State on Dec. 20.

"I know he's taller (now) and he just runs the show, usually," Davis said. "They've definitely got a good perimeter game now. They're shooting the ball and getting up and down from the little film I've seen. It's definitely going to be a tough game."

Where the Beavers don't match up well is down low. Both teams have three players that stand 6-foot-10 or taller, but where Oregon gets consistent production from Ian Crosswhite and Matt Short; only Kevin Field and Derek Potter have seen action for the Beavers.



Erik Bishoff Photographer

Oregon guard James Davis (1) will play a key role during Aaron Brooks' absence.

Field and Potter combine to average 3.5 points per game. Crosswhite and Short, combined, average 15.4.

"Our team chemistry is good and they understand they've got a lot to learn still," Oregon State head coach Jay John told the Corvallis Gazette-Times after the loss to UCLA. "But they've been ready to compete, and from that standpoint I've been real pleased with them."

Of course, matchups go out the window when the Ducks and Beavers meet. Even though the Ducks have won the last nine games between the teams, no contest has been tilted too much in Oregon's favor.

A 91-62 Oregon win at McArthur Court two years ago represents the

largest margin in the last five years.

The last time Oregon State won? That would be Jan. 30, 1999, a 48-45 victory in Corvallis.

"These are always tough games for us," Kent said. "These are never ever easy basketball games. I expect this wouldn't be any different."

"The success has been we've had an opportunity to just pull games out. I think we've shot it well when we've gone over there and played and when we play (at McArthur). But at the same time, with Jay putting his system in, maybe we've had a little bit more continuity in place. All of a sudden now, they've continuity in place as well."

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## SLUMP

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place. Oregon, on the other hand, was picked to finish fourth but sits in a tie for last with Washington State.

Along with their impressive start, several Beavers are close to finding a place in team history. Estavan needs 40 assists and Chaney needs five blocks to become the all-time leaders at Oregon State in their respective categories. Also, Chapman is 45 points short and Esta-

van 63 of becoming the 13th and 14th players in team history to score 1,000 career points.

Shettlers said the Ducks need to overcome their slow start if they are going to beat the talented Beavers.

"It's in the past," Shettlers said. "Like the coaches said, we can't do anything about 0-4, you just have to learn from it every game. You can't dwell on the past or you're not going anywhere."

After Saturday's game, Oregon is on

the road for five of its next seven games. If the Ducks have any aspirations of an NCAA tournament bid, a win Saturday is essential.

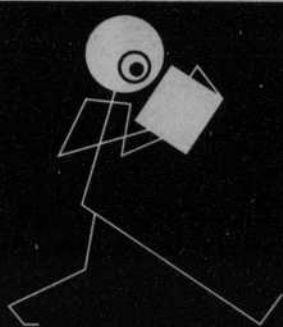
"It's a big game, but we just want to go out and make sure we have a lot of fun and treat it like any other game," Steen said. "We're not worried about who we're playing. We just need to worry about getting done what we need to."

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