

Rodriguez ends speculation, signs contract with Tigers

Ivan Rodriguez signed with Detroit for a four-year contract worth \$40 million

By Juan C. Rodriguez
South Florida Sun-Sentinel (KRT)

Just over a year ago Pudge Rodriguez told a room full of Florida Marlins executives, players and fans that his new team was good enough to make the playoffs.

Rodriguez was in a similar setting Monday afternoon in Detroit, only this time the playoff pronouncements did not flow with the same conviction. They may not be post-season-ready yet, but the Tigers gave Rodriguez the contractual commitment the Marlins couldn't.

The two sides finalized a four-year, \$40 million deal. It also includes a \$13 million club option for the 2008 season or \$3 million buyout.

In the context of 2003, Rodriguez is going from first to worst. He helped the Marlins win the World Series and now is on a club coming off a 119-loss campaign. The addition

of Rodriguez, coupled with Rondell White, Fernando Vina, and Jason Johnson, should lead to a more respectable showing.

"I know they had a bad season last year, but I think this year it's going to be a completely different season," said Rodriguez, who will defer \$8 million over the life of the contract at 1 percent interest. "We're going to see this organization, this Detroit Tigers team in the playoffs pretty soon."

For 2004, the Marlins still have a better chance of playing in the post-season without Rodriguez than the Tigers do with him. The Marlins, who signed Rodriguez to a one-year, \$10 million deal last January, had hoped to retain their National League Championship Series MVP.

Unable to offer him salary arbitration, the Marlins had to re-sign him before Dec. 7 or forfeit negotiating rights until May 1. Rodriguez was adamant about not taking a pay cut and declined a two-year, \$16 million guarantee with a vesting option for a third season.

Tiger owner Mike Ilitch took a

hands-on approach in the Rodriguez courtship, convincing him he could have the same impact in Detroit he had in South Florida.

"One of the reasons I came here was the respect that Mr. Ilitch brought to me," Rodriguez said. "(People) have been saying (I'm) coming from a winning team to a losing team, but for me this team is not a losing team. This is a major-league ball club and everybody can have bad seasons. Unfortunately the Detroit Tigers had a bad season last year, but it's already over."

Rodriguez's contract could be over unless he keeps his back healthy. Provisions in the deal allow the Tigers to buy out the remaining years for \$5 million if Rodriguez spends 35 or more days on the disabled list in 2004 or 2005 with a lower spine injury. In 2006, the buyout price decreases to \$4 million if Rodriguez is sidelined for the same period and reason.

(c) 2004 South Florida Sun-Sentinel. Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.

Halftime festivities, streaker concern football executives

A number of events made for headlines at Sunday's Super Bowl XXXVIII

By Hank Gola
New York Daily News (KRT)

HOUSTON — NFL officials said Monday they were embarrassed that Super Bowl XXXVIII became the first to have needed a parental warning.

Commissioner Paul Tagliabue delivered a stern rebuke of the MTV-produced halftime show that ended with Janet Jackson's breast on display for a huge national TV audience. League spokesman Greg Aiello also admitted that a "security lapse" had allowed a professional streaker to delay the second-half kickoff while he did a jig on the field.

"It's troubling," Aiello said.

The trouble started at the climax of a sexually charged halftime show that was a long way from the Al Hirt-Pete Fountain performances of

Super Bowl infancy. After singing the words, "I'll get you naked by the end of this song," pop heartthrob Justin Timberlake reached across Jackson's chest and ripped off half her top, exposing her right breast, complete with some sort of solar medallion pastie.

After the smoke literally cleared, professional streaker Mark Francis Roberts, of Liverpool, England, made his entrance. Wearing an official's uniform, he sprinted onto the field, then peeled off a tear-away costume. Clad only in a G-string and a painted-on ad for an online betting service, he danced for 30 seconds as stunned members of both teams looked on. Eventually security rushed onto the field and brought down the interloper in a heap, with the help of the shoulder pad of Patriots special teamer Matt Chatham.

(c) 2004, New York Daily News. Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.

WINS

continued from page 7

came about because the Ducks played one more game than allowed last season, forcing Oregon to pay the price this season.

At 10-6, the Ducks are in a precarious situation. The NCAA Tournament can be selective in the teams it chooses for the Big Dance, and the Ducks will have to prove they are worthy. A 6-3 second half would net the team only 16 wins on the season, probably not enough for a postseason bid.

The second-half schedule, though, could help Oregon in the long run.

Oregon hosts UCLA, getting a shot at the Bruins, who defeated the Ducks by seven in Los Angeles in early January.

The Ducks will get to see Arizona at McArthur Court before that, hoping to solve the problems the team faced in a 24-point blowout to the Wildcats two weeks ago. Kent called that game a "disaster," but it may have been the only one of the league season.

Oregon almost knocked off No. 2 Stanford on Saturday and was outdone in the end by Oregon State in January.

Those are four losses that, with just a little luck, could have been whittled down to two.

"I think the key thing for us right now is to just regroup, take a couple days off and let our legs come back," Kent said. "Then get ready for a great Civil War game and start the second half of the Pac-10 season off on the

right foot. We have a chance now to sustain and continue to get better. We're one of the few teams I say that can get better because we're learning more, we're getting more comfortable and we're getting our point guard back."

The Ducks are expected to welcome Brooks back into the lineup in late February. Kent said last week he is expected to begin some rehabilitation later this week, and if all goes well Brooks will have a chance to return as the Pac-10 regular season gets into its final weeks.

At this point, Stanford is in control of the conference at 9-0, followed by Arizona (6-3), then the trio at 5-4.

Guards

Luke Jackson has done everything the Ducks have asked and more.

He's been close to or at the top of the Pac-10's scoring list and leads Oregon in points, rebounds and assists per game.

Oregon has been buoyed by the continued emergence of James Davis on the perimeter. One of the most deadly three-point shooters in the nation, Davis has been consistent in keeping opposing teams at bay from the outside.

Otherwise, getting Brooks back into the lineup will be a boost for Oregon, which has seen Jackson carry the ball up the court on a continual basis.

Forwards

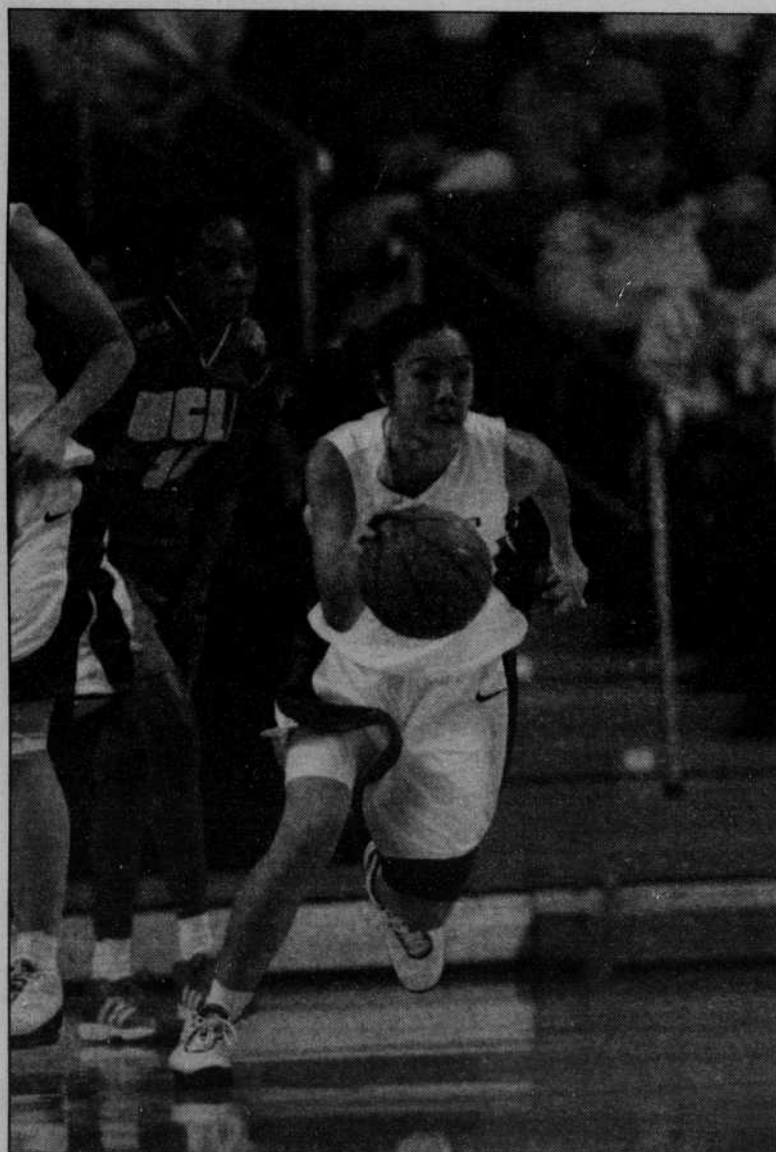
Ian Crosswhite and Platt have been impressive down low, adding an

element to Oregon's offense the team was missing last season.

"Our big guys are really good," Kent said. "Granted, we shoot a lot of threes. Those big guys are good and are getting better. I think that's the thing people underestimate. Last year, they could kind of lock up the three and dared you to throw it in there. Well, we want to throw it in there now."

Jay Anderson has been a key reserve for the Ducks, providing valuable minutes. Adam Zahn and Matt Short have seen little or no action in most of the conference games.

Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.



Adam Amato Senior Photographer

With 140 assists, Corrie Mizusawa is seventh on Oregon's single-season assists list.

WOMEN

continued from page 7 throughout the season.

One of the worst falls was the 0-4 start to Pac-10 play in late December. The Ducks entered the conference season with an 8-2 record and promptly hit a roadblock. Oregon is one week into the second half of the Pac-10 season, and the Ducks have a win against UCLA and a loss to USC behind them.

"Turning the corner on the second half of the season, we're 1-1," Smith said. "And that's better than we started."

Picked to finish as high as fourth in the Pac-10, the Ducks were somewhat dependent on a healthy team and, primarily, the return of a healthy Catherine Kraayeveld.

As it turned out, the senior was healthy for five games before suffering a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee, the same knee that had a staph infection last season that caused her to miss 13 games.

The Ducks found a small positive spin by getting a medical redshirt year for Kraayeveld, so the senior will return next season with a year of eligibility remaining.

Kraayeveld's injury isn't the only one to test Oregon's depth. The Ducks started the season without sophomore transfer Chelsea Wagner and lone senior Kayla Steen. Since Wagner and Steen returned in November, sophomore Carolyn Ganes,

freshman Jessica Shetters, junior Kedzie Gunderson and Wagner have missed playing time because of one injury or another.

"They've taken a little wind out of our sails at times," Smith said. "We just have to get to the point where we can get over those kinds of injuries."

Wagner's injury is perhaps the worst. She is playing on a torn lateral meniscus in her left knee — injured in the loss to Washington — which is protected by a brace in each game and drained prior to each contest.

The guard hasn't missed much practice time, though, while Ganes' injuries — an ankle that is now mostly recovered and back that acts up — have kept her out of full practices.

"Once you get out of that rhythm, it's hard to get it back," Smith said.

Keeping a rhythm on the court is what junior transfer Corrie Mizusawa is in charge of during the game.

Mizusawa made a big impression in her first non-exhibition game as a Duck. On Nov. 15 against Valparaiso, Mizusawa's 13 assists were two shy of setting a new single-game Oregon record.

"Corrie has gone through an evolution and transformation," Smith said. "The team knows that if they run the floor and get into position, they will be rewarded (with a pass)."

Mizusawa's 6.7 assists per game

average has her at No. 7 all-time on Oregon's single-season assists list with 140 this season.

As for weaknesses with the Ducks, choosing their biggest is a draw.

It could be their ability to lose a lead late in the game, eventually losing the game as well.

On the other hand, it might be their inability to play offense against the press.

Regardless, the Ducks still have some kinks to work out for their second half. Two of those kinks don't include starting point guard Mizusawa and one starting forward, freshman Eleanor Haring.

Haring has played in all 21 games this season, starting 14. She is Oregon's third-leading scorer with eight points per game.

"Eleanor has grown and become our best player in terms of go-to offense," Smith said.

Oregon has gone to Haring, Mizusawa and Wagner for three-pointers and everyone on its bench and starting lineup for something this season, be it minutes, rebounds or points.

The key for the Ducks' second half will be making sure they can continue to go to everyone on their bench, and avoiding a few of those injuries.

"Since the Washington State game (Oregon's second Pac-10 win), we're more aggressive and tough," Smith said.

Contact the senior sports reporter at mindirice@dailyemerald.com.