

SPORTS

Best bet
NCAA basketball:
Gonzaga vs. San Francisco
8 p.m., ESPN2

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Dark skies will soon turn blue yet again



Hank Hager
Behind the dish

At the outset of Wednesday's press conference at Hayward Field's Bowerman Building, clouds hung over the venerable track, keeping visibility low.

By the end of the conference, the clouds had lifted and given way to the sun, which lit up the Eugene sky with golden overtones.

The future is dark right now for the new arena project, but in the hopes of University President Dave Frohnmayer, it will soon be bright.

"I'm sad about a window we missed," he said.

That window — whether one, five or even 10 years down the road — will be opened again. Right now, it's closed shut, much like the ones at the highest level of McArthur Court.

Whether or not that's positive is in the eye of the beholder. Soon though, Frohnmayer said, that window will have to be opened, whether gently or through force.

McArthur Court is an old facility. It's been around for the better part of a century, and it's going to have to be replaced soon enough.

In the reality of the state of Oregon, circa 2004, money can not be spent frivolously. The Lillis Business Complex is a sight to behold and shows how well money can be spent when the University does so wisely.

But you can't stop there, and to get too deep into the arena-building process without solid footing would have been foolish.

"We have a lot of projects that need to be built and they will all be built first-class," Frohnmayer said. "(An arena) has to be functional for 75 years, maybe a century.

"We are back to assessing the project, but we know we have to do it."

Frohnmayer, Athletics Director Bill Moos and Vice President for Administration Dan Williams were all on hand for the announcement. While Frohnmayer is the figurehead of the triumvirate, each played a key role in the decision to stop the project in its tracks.

Many will say they told them so, that a facility is not the most-needed thing on the Oregon campus right now. Maybe that's true, maybe it's not.

Again, that's in the eye of the beholder. There are many with opinions out there, from the University faculty to the Eugene community. They've expressed their desires, whether positive or not. Frohnmayer said the University's faculty has been informed throughout the project's steps.

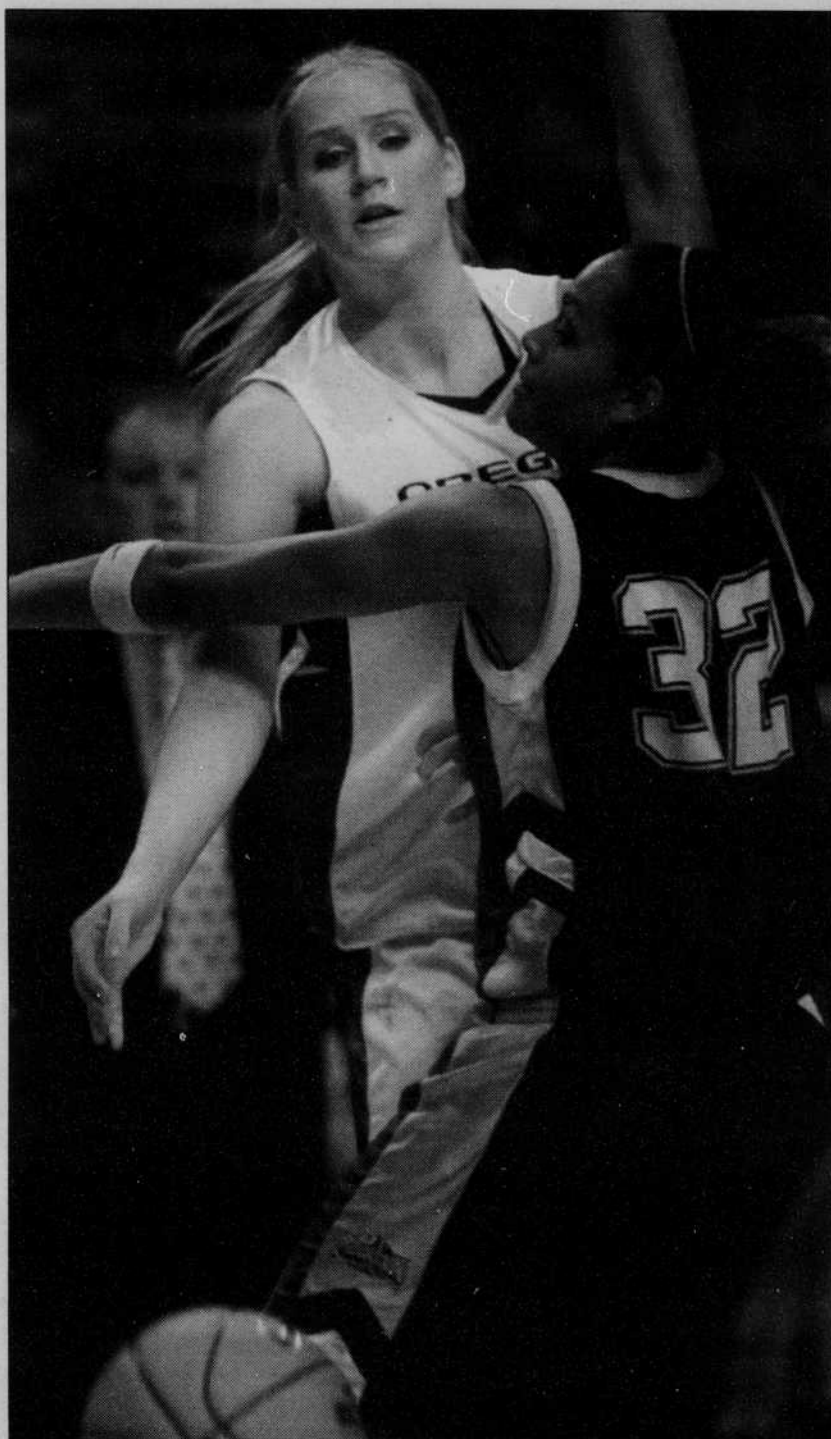
"It won't come as any great surprise to them," he said.

It would be easy to complain about the process, especially since it has netted the University nothing at this point. But that would be wrong.

Frohnmayer, Moos and Williams should be commended for having the sense to stop while the going is still good.

Turn to **HAGER**, page 16

Next BIG thing



Adam Amato Senior Photographer

Jessica Shetters (43) is averaging 2.9 points and 2.3 rebounds per game in her first season.

Oregon basketball player Jessica Shetters has her teammates to make the college transition easier

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

Jessica Shetters is just a normal college freshman. She has classes to attend, work to get to on time and friends, movies and homework to fill the remainder of her waking hours.

The fact that Shetters' work happens to be playing for the Oregon women's basketball team, and many of the friends are teammates or athletes on other Oregon teams, doesn't mean the college thing is any easier for her.

"Sometimes the regular students don't understand the level of work that we have to put in," Shetters said. "They think 'Oh, you're on scholarship, you have everything paid for.' Well, you kind of have to work to keep that scholarship, and it's a lot of work."

Basketball isn't all work for Shetters. She loves the sport that she's played since she was a little girl, but since the move to Eugene, the Duck program has shown Shetters that she needs to be easily adaptable and has a lot to learn.

There have been a few tough transitions in the Portland native's young collegiate career.

She had to adapt to being away from her home and mother and living in close quarters with another person. For the first time, she's playing against and living near people close in stature to her 6-foot-6 frame.

At Portland's Wilson High School and in the Portland Interscholastic League, Shetters was heads above her competition and her classmates. She was one of three prep recruits to be the nation's tallest freshmen this season.

"Being tall is great; I like attention," Shetters said. "But I wasn't always like that. I used to be so self-conscious about how tall I was and how people would look at me. I think just coming to college and being around people that are taller than me, especially athletes, has really helped me just be comfortable with myself and everything."

"When I came here, my teammates were only a couple inches shorter than me and (physically) bigger than me. Just playing with them in practice every day, that was a huge challenge."

Shetters is the second-tallest player — behind 6-foot-7 Stefanie Kasperski, who played from 1986 to 1990 — in Oregon history. She was also the first Oregon high school recruit to sign with the Ducks since recent graduate Kourtney Shreve made the move to Eugene in 1999.

Shetters was also thrust into the spotlight earlier than head coach Bev Smith would have liked because of an injury to senior Catherine Kraayeveld. Although Kraayeveld has been sidelined from practice for much of the season, Shetters still has the senior nearby as a resource.

"Cat's been like a mentor to me," Shetters said. "Not just on the court, but off the court and how she presents herself. She's definitely a role model for me. It's nice to see somebody who's similar

Turn to **BIG**, page 14

Ducks' stretch drive starts in Seattle

The Ducks defeated Washington earlier this year and want to avoid a season split with the Huskies

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

Can the Ducks feel comfortable sitting in third place in the Pacific-10 Conference?

"Definitely," Oregon guard James Davis said.

"The time is now for us to get a string of wins together. We don't have many ballgames left; we've got eight. We definitely need to string some wins together."

The first of those eight comes tonight in Seattle as Oregon takes on Washington. It's the first chance for the Ducks to jump-start that winning streak they will need to earn an NCAA Tournament berth.

Oregon will have to do it against an ever-dangerous Washington team. The Ducks defeated the Huskies on Jan. 15, but have since watched Washington go 5-1.

The Huskies streaked to five straight wins after the loss at McArthur Court. They could've made it six last week against UCLA

but lost by five.

"UCLA, that was a game (Washington) probably should've won," Davis said. "They're playing real well, are always talented and are athletic all over the floor. They're starting to come together."

The Huskies (10-9 overall, 5-6 Pacific-10 Conference) present an athletic test for the Ducks. Of their five projected starters, none stands taller than 6-foot-8. It is Washington's most diminutive player, 5-foot-9 Nate Robinson, that brings the most athleticism and raw talent to the table.

"Nate's all heart and he's fun to watch," Oregon forward Luke Jackson said. "He helped beat Arizona up there, and at Oregon State a couple weeks before that, he came back and pretty much single-handedly brought them back into the game. He's just a hard worker, a hard player."

"At the same time, he's really small and we can take advantage of that."

The Ducks (11-6, 6-4) will take advantage with two posts — Ian Crosswhite and Mitch Platt — who have been playing well lately.

Crosswhite scored 14 points in 32 minutes against the Huskies and Platt, who was coming back from an ankle injury during the game, has scored 19 points in his past two games.

"I think we need to stick with the same game plan because it worked for us," Platt. "I think we're definitely getting the ball inside more this time around and that's going to present some big problems for them."

With those eight games left, today's contest at Bank of America Arena begins the stretch drive for the Ducks.

Oregon heads to Pullman to take on Washington State on Saturday, then hosts Arizona and Arizona State in a crucial home series. If the Ducks can win six of those eight, an NCAA bid is not out of the question. Anything less than that, though, and it can get hairy.

The Ducks' stretch began Saturday against a tough Oregon State team that nearly pulled out the win.

"That was important and it's going to be just as important this weekend because there's a chance we'll be in the same situation," Oregon forward Ian Crosswhite said. "We may have to dig deep and pull out both of these games and we're going to have to be ready for that."

Last season, the Ducks went 4-4 during their final eight games. They defeated Washington State, but lost, 78-66, to Washington in Seattle.

Turn to **STRETCH**, page 16

MEN'S BASKETBALL