

Club baseball starts off season with big bang

The Ducks have their eye on making the NCBA World Series in Bradenton, Fla

By Kirsten McEwen
Freelance Reporter

It's hard to lose when a team dominates every single category on offense and defense.

Oregon's Club baseball team did that, outscoring its opponent, Evergreen State, 44-2 over the course of last weekend. The Ducks played three games — two Saturday and one Sunday — to cap off their first games of the 2004 season with three solid wins.

Saturday's first game set the tone for the entire weekend, with Oregon's pitching staff dictating the contest. In the Ducks 12-0 win, pitcher Matt Mensik threw four

innings and had nine strikeouts. Following Mensik's lead, Jordan Shaw pitched the second game and finished with eight strikeouts after pitching a total of five innings en route to Oregon's 20-2 win.

Sunday's game proved to be no different than the first two as Evergreen failed to score a single run for the second time in three games. Jay Tlougan pitched two innings for Oregon, and the Ducks came away with a 12-0 win.

"I was most happy with our pitching," coordinator Jon Loomis said. "We were throwing strikes, being consistent and hitting our spots."

The Ducks also were successful on the offensive end as Oregon managed to put up impressive numbers, not only on the scoreboard but on an individual basis as well.

Gavin Wahl-Stephens had eight runs batted in and posted one home run on the weekend. Following Wahl-Stephens' lead was teammate Jeff Douglas, who also had one

homerun and three RBIs.

Left-fielder Mason Wright, who went 4 for 7 on the weekend, believed the Ducks came prepared to play and competed hard in every inning against Evergreen State.

"Our intensity was great from the beginning, especially for a bunch of

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Mason Wright
Left fielder

guys who haven't played together very much," Wright said.

After winning all three National Club Baseball Association (NCBA) games this weekend, Loomis said the team has high expectations of

their performance this year.

"Anything less than a World Series appearance would be a disappointing season," Loomis said.

The World Series will take place in Bradenton, Fla., at McKechnie Field on May 26-31. McKechnie Field serves as the site of the spring training for the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Before Oregon begins its journey to Florida, the Ducks will compete in the NCBA's Pacific Mountain Conference. Oregon will compete against Central Oregon Community College, Evergreen State and Western Washington.

Although Oregon dominated in every single way in every single game this past weekend, Loomis believes the team has some minor issues they need to work on.

"We still need to improve on our small game bunting and situational hitting," Loomis said.

The Ducks will also compete in a number of tournaments this spring,

the first hosted by Central Oregon Community College in Bend on Feb. 28 and Feb. 29. Oregon will face two teams already in their conference — Central Oregon and Evergreen State — and will compete against two new faces, Eastern Washington and Humboldt State.

After the tournament in Bend, the Ducks will return home the following weekend and will host Western Washington — Oregon's toughest league opponent — on April 3 and 4 at Eugene's Civic Stadium.

With new players and a higher level of commitment, Loomis said this year there is a reenergized team playing on the field, which is why Oregon has its eyes on competing hard day in and day out.

"I think we will be an all-round competitive team throughout the entire season," Wright said. "We are going to give anyone a good game."

Kirsten McEwen is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

SPORTS BRIEF

Washington, not Neuheisel, cited

SEATTLE — The NCAA has cited the University of Washington and its former head football coach, Rick Neuheisel, for violating NCAA rules on gambling and recruiting.

Washington was cited for "lack of institutional control," a major violation that could carry severe penalties

but that has also resulted in lesser sanctions in some cases.

Neuheisel, who was fired by the school last summer for gambling and lying about it to NCAA investigators, was cited by the NCAA for taking part in two college basketball pools in 2002 and 2003 in which he bet \$6,400 and won \$17,619.

Dick Thompson, Washington's acting athletic director, said in a statement Tuesday that the university disagreed

with the NCAA's allegation about lack of institutional control.

The NCAA also alleged that other UW coaches and staff participated in low-stakes college betting pools and that the UW allowed improper accounting for the cost of private boat trips for recruits.

The NCAA asked UW and Neuheisel to respond to the allegations, which were outlined in a Feb. 16 letter to UW that was

received Tuesday.

The Pac-10 conference made similar allegations late last year, although it contended that a "failure to monitor" had led to gambling violations rather than a lack of institutional control. UW, which is awaiting a final ruling by the Pac-10, disputed the "failure to monitor" finding while admitting that Neuheisel and others had taken part in pools.

Neuheisel has contended that he participated in the pools based on memos put out by the athletic department in 1999 and 2003 that incorrectly said it was permissible for athletic department personnel to take part in certain college sports betting pools.

Neuheisel's attorney, Robert Sulkin, said Tuesday that the NCAA's allegation about the lack of

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Richardson (for the sake of returning the champion), Jones and Shaquille O'Neal.

In all seriousness, I'm willing to bet that if Shaq jogged to the hoop, lifted his 340-pound frame into the air and dunked with enough power to break the backboard, there would be five "10s" across the board.

James needed to be in uniform just because of his star power. Instead, he sat on the sidelines and left early from his disappointment.

But seriously, the whole All-Star weekend itself has become a joke. Now the NBA has events like the Shooting Stars and the Skills Challenge. Would somebody please tell me what these are?

What will David Stern think of next? Here's an idea: How about the NBA Legends dunk contest? Bring back former winners Dee Brown (1991), Michael Jordan (1987, 88), Spud Webb (1986) and Dominique Wilkins (1985, 90). Now there's a dunk contest I'd watch.

Better yet, how about the NBA Big Men/Pro-Am dunk contest. You could have teams. How about Shaq and

rapper Fat Joe versus Yao Ming and Warren Sapp?

Maybe even throw the Tim Duncan and David Wells team into the mix.

You know you would watch that contest.

Don't get me entirely wrong. I still enjoy All-Star weekend and probably always will. I've watched the events since I was a youngster. What I don't enjoy are the anticlimactic endings and all the self-loathing that occurs.

There's no denying that Richardson's pass to himself off the backboard where he caught the ball with his left hand, passed it between his legs, and then threw it down with his right hand was just plain crazy.

And Jones' pass off the backboard to himself with full extension followed by a mean tomahawk slam was just incredible in its own right. Both dunks deserved 50s, and both dunks got 50s.

But when the best dunks come out in the first round, it hinders the competition. In other words, it means that Jones wins while sitting on the bench.

The NBA needs to find a way to bring credibility and excitement back to All-Star weekend. The NBA could change some of the rules, for starters.

Why does a dunk attempt that accidentally sees the ball fall into the hoop have to count?

NBA Stars should want to compete in these competitions. Jones wasn't even going to come at one point because he wanted to vacation for the weekend.

But the weekend will always have its good points. No one will forget Denver's Chris Andersen's lovely hairstyle that required even more hair gel than Steve Lavin's slick look.

And even though you won by default, Freddie, you still the man.

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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Hey, he went to Oregon

Soon after the Ducks were done slipping past Washington State in Pullman, former Oregon guard Fred

Jones was on his way to winning the NBA's slam dunk contest at the All-Star game in Los Angeles.

Jones, who plays for Indiana, combined to score 92 points on two dunks in the first round. He then proceeded to defeat Golden State guard Jason Richardson in the final.

Jones scored a perfect 50 on his first final round dunk, then received a 36 on his second for a total score of 86.

Richardson finished with a 78.

"It was an honor to be out here, because Jason Richardson is one of the greatest dunkers ever," Jones told

reporters afterward. "I was just trying to be creative and do something different." Richardson had won the previous two times.

Of note

Since Arizona and Arizona State joined the Pac-10 for the 1978-79 season, the Ducks have swept the

two at McArthur Court seven times. The last time came during Oregon's perfect season at home, 2001-02.

Oregon has been swept six times, the last coming in 1998-99.

Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

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