

Sports Editor:
Hank Hager
hankhager@dailymerald.com

Best bet
NHL:
Vancouver vs. Colorado
6:30 p.m., ESPN2

Wednesday, March 3, 2004



Mindi Rice

The girl and the game

Injured forward's dedication remains

In McArthur Court, while the women's basketball team practices, the injured Ducks sit to the side.

Those at practice Tuesday saw Corrie Mizusawa, Chelsea Wagner and Andrea Bills in folding chairs along the sideline.

One player was missing.

Off to the right, at one of the baskets set up along the side for drills and breakout work, was Cathrine Kraayeveld.

While the brace on her knee — the one visual clue to her surgery on a torn anterior cruciate ligament — remains in place, Kraayeveld can practice now. Well, she has pool workouts, she runs a little bit and she shoots around during practice. She doesn't participate in drills with the team, but her presence is felt from the sidelines.

"Cathrine's example is in what she does and how she works and her work ethic," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said. "I think our players see that and see that every day. They see it when she's in the pool, they see the way she's come back. I think that's kind of where she feels she can be an example."

Kraayeveld is the only current player to be around for four years and the only remaining Duck who was coached by the tempestuous Jody Runge.

She was supposed to be the leader on Oregon's two-senior squad. Between Kraayeveld and Kayla Steen, who transferred from a community college for her junior season, the Ducks had two automatic leaders on the otherwise young squad.

Instead, the injury has kept Kraayeveld on the sidelines, giving her a small opportunity to lead from the bench.

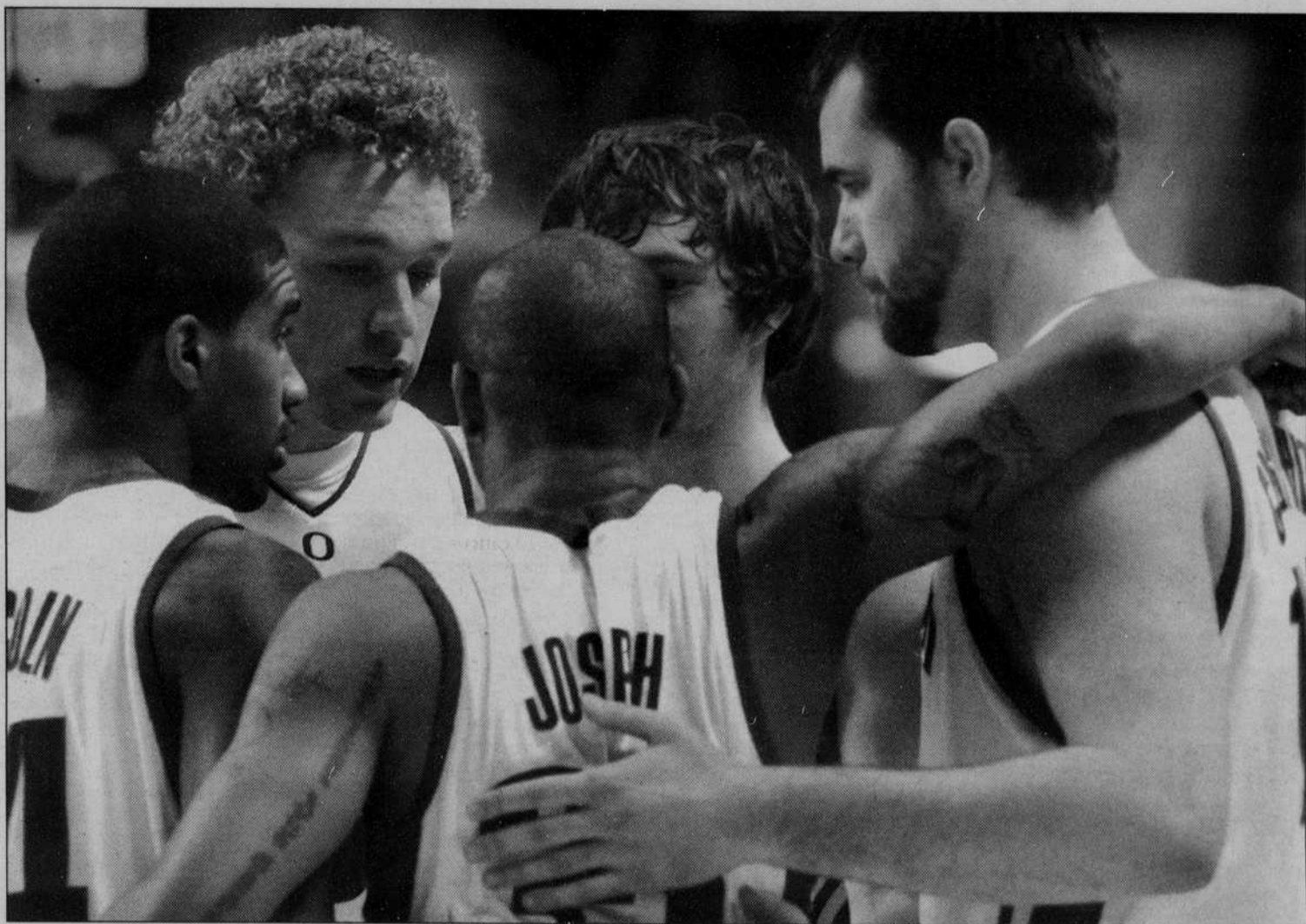
"There's certain stuff I can say and some stuff I have to be careful not to say because I'm not out there with them, sweating and doing all that stuff," Kraayeveld said. "It's kind of a line I have to be careful about, but I've done a good job, I think, of knowing when not to say stuff and when to just be an encourager."

Instead of focusing on what she has missed this season, Kraayeveld is looking ahead to next season. Steen is the only player Oregon will lose to graduation, and four players — Bills, Brandi Davis, Kedzie Gunderson and Mizusawa — will join Kraayeveld to fill out a tough senior class.

"Having everyone being able to play as much as they have is just going to help us that much more," Kraayeveld said. "They're going to be so much more experienced and just understanding a lot more than if we wouldn't have had these injuries. It's unfortunate we did but it gave them an opportunity to play more minutes."

Kraayeveld, who will return next season after medical redshirt rules fell in her favor, may even have to fight for a starting position next season. Oregon's five

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Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Oregon has lost four straight games and six of its last eight games. The Ducks host Southern California and UCLA this week in hopes of making the Pac-10 Tournament.

Ducks focus on defense this week

The Ducks are getting dangerously close to missing next week's Pac-10 Tournament after losing four straight

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

Two weeks ago, the Ducks were riding high, sitting in third place and fighting for a berth in the NCAA Tournament.

Before a 21-point blowout loss to Stanford on Saturday, an NIT berth was beginning to slip away from Oregon.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Now the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament is in jeopardy for the Ducks, who have lost four straight games and six of their last eight.

That alone should cause worry among the 12-11 Ducks as they focus on Southern California and UCLA this week.

"There is a huge sense of urgency," Oregon forward Jay Anderson said. "We might need to win them to get into the Pac-10 Tournament. We just want to be on a roll when we get into the Pac-10 Tournament."

To think, Oregon at one point in the season

seemed more destined to win the Pac-10 Tournament than to fall completely out of it.

But now the Ducks are tied with USC and UCLA for fifth place in the Pac-10. Washington State is a game behind and Oregon State is two away.

"I expected us to have a lot better season," Anderson said. "It's somewhat disappointing, but right now, we can't worry about that. We need to focus on what we can change or what we can do in the next two games to straighten out our season."

The season got bent out of shape as it wore on and has come close to breaking during the team's four-game losing streak.

During that stretch, the Ducks have been dominated. Opposing teams have scored an average of 86 points in Oregon's last four games. Meanwhile, the Ducks have averaged a shade less than 75.

"Defense has stuck out in my mind throughout the course of the year," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "It's still beyond me why I have not done a good job of getting this team to understand, or buy into or convince them to play defense and just how important it is."

The Ducks believe that they can make waves in the short Pac-10 Tournament. Oregon would

most likely have to win all three games, which includes the championship contest, to earn an invite to the NCAA Tournament.

On a lower level, to get into the NIT, Oregon (7-9 Pac-10) must have at least a .500 overall record. Defeating USC and UCLA would be a step in the right direction.

"If we can get these games and have a little momentum going into the Pac-10 Tournament, it'd be interesting to see how Stanford and Arizona played in the Pac-10 Tournament," Oregon forward Luke Jackson said. "Arizona's kind of been known to skip the Pac-10 Tournament and rest their guys. I think it'd be hard for Stanford to go 3-0 as beat up as they are. I think a team with a lot of momentum going into the Pac-10 Tournament could be dangerous, and hopefully that's us."

Second-half MVP

If Oregon could start out games by playing the second half first, guard Aaron Brooks might give the Ducks the boost they need.

The Seattle native has scored 41 points and dished out 14 assists while turning the ball over seven times since returning Feb. 19 against Arizona.

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Stanford struggles against UO, OSU

The Cardinal hobbles into the Pac-10 Tournament after splitting games with the Oregon schools last week

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

Maybe Stanford isn't a lock to win the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament after all.

With the start of the tournament just days away, the No. 12 Cardinal is still the favorite to come out on top. But it's just not a sure thing anymore.

Stanford closed the season on a shaky note last week, splitting road games against Oregon

and Oregon State.

After losing 67-66 to Oregon on Thursday, Stanford was lucky to avoid being swept by Oregon State blew several chances Saturday to defeat the Cardinal in the game's final minute.

Forward Nicole Powell rescued the Cardinal with a 15-foot baseline jumper with 5.4 seconds remaining, helping Stanford to a 67-66 win against the Beavers.

The split cost Stanford a shot at an outright Pac-10 title. Instead, the Cardinal finished the season as co-champions with Arizona, with both teams sporting a 14-4 conference mark.

PAC 10

Stanford is the No. 1 seed in the Pac-10 Tournament after a conference tiebreaker.

Despite the unexpected split, Stanford head coach Tara VanDerveer was focusing on the positive effect of defeating Oregon State.

"We needed this," VanDerveer told The Daily Barometer on Saturday. "We had to work very hard for it. We looked absolutely dead in the water, then we started pressing and I think the aggressiveness defensively really helped us."

Stanford will face the winner of Friday's Pac-10 Tournament game between No. 8 Oregon and No. 9 California on Saturday.

One advantage the Cardinal may have

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