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Best bet
NCAA basketball:
Villanova vs. Seton Hall
6 p.m., ESPN

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Oregon returns home for Canada

The Ducks face the Canadian Olympic team today at 2:30 p.m. in their first home game

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

The No. 16 Oregon women's softball team is more than happy to play Team Canada today at Howe Field.

For the first time this season, the Ducks will sleep in their own beds the night before a game. They'll be able to go to class the day of the game, and have dinner at home and sleep in their own beds after the game.

"We love Howe Field," Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "To play in front of classmates, family and friends, to sleep in our own beds, it's just going to be so cool. We're so excited."

The 2:30 p.m. start ends a five-week string of road trip after road trip that took the Ducks (17-5) from Florida to California and back.

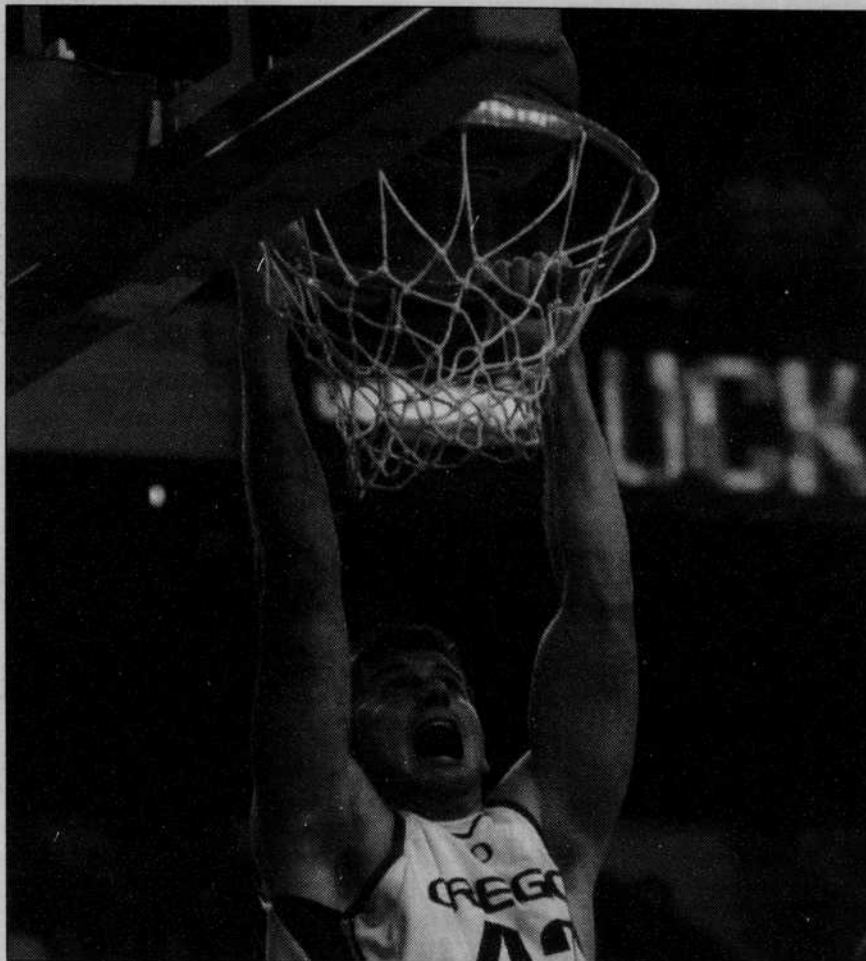
"We wish we could play a lot more here," Arendsen said. "We love the fans and the atmosphere. Even though the amenities are not the greatest, the field itself and the scenery. It's just spectacular. I think it defines what Oregon is."

The twist in today's home opener against Team Canada is the Ducks won't be a completely whole team.

Transfer pitcher Ani Nyhus will be suited up in the opposing dugout. While she is in her first season at Oregon, she also is trying to get one of the seven remaining spots on the Canadian Olympic team.

"We're incredibly proud of Ani," Arendsen said. "She won't pitch against Oregon. We had kind of a little handshake agreement that she wouldn't pitch for either

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Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Adam Zahn played a key role in Oregon's victories over USC and UCLA last week.

Oregon's balance ready to be tested

The Ducks head to Los Angeles with the depth they've been seeking all season long

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

All season, Oregon head coach Ernie Kent has spoken about the depth that the Ducks supposedly possessed.

Throughout most of the Pacific-10 Conference season, however, those words were spoken in vain. Injuries to Aaron Brooks and Jordan Kent plagued the team, sometimes forcing Ernie Kent to go short with his bench.

Most of the time during the conference season, Kent was forced to play just eight or nine players in a game. And more often than not, the bench players Kent was able to get into the game saw as little as five minutes.

That forced the likes of Luke Jackson, James Davis and Ian Crosswhite to get more than their fair share of time on the court.

That trend, though, came to a halt recently in Oregon's victories against South-

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Oregon women edged for first at Duck Invite

Washington State's Kim Welch took home the tournament victory for the third straight year

By Brian Smith
Freelance Reporter

The Oregon women's golf team came agonizingly close Tuesday to winning its second title of the year at the 2004 Duck Invitational, played on the 5,698-yard, par-72 Eugene Country Club course.

DUCK GOLF

As one of the only two teams contending for the title, the Ducks went head-to-head with Washington State, and in the end it boiled down to one stroke that made the difference. Oregon finished the final round with a team score of 301, while Washington State posted a 296, erasing the four-shot deficit from the day before.

That gave the Cougars the team title with a two-day total of 913. Washington State's charge was spearheaded by a pair of 1-under 71s in the final round, shot by Kim Welch and Maria Kostina. In the end, the second 71 is what cost the Ducks the tournament.

"When I saw that 301 go up on the board, my heart skipped," Oregon head coach Shannon Rouillard said. "But Washington State played awesome. When you lose, you want a team to beat you by shooting a good number, and they did that. So hat's off to them for beating us by a shot."

Therese Wenslow led the Ducks by shooting 77-72-74-223 to finish five strokes back of Welch and in a tie for second place with Cal State Northridge's Elizabeth Allen. Wenslow's second place finish was a career-best for the sophomore from Bunkelflostrand, Sweden. Wenslow started the day two strokes back but had trouble closing the gap due to an unfriendly putter.

"I just wasn't putting very well," said Wenslow. "I think those three rounds were a great test of patience, and actually I think I passed it."

Along with Wenslow, five other Ducks finished in the top 15. Junior Johnna Nealy and sophomore Erin Andrews tied for 7th, both hitting the 230 mark. Sophomore Michelle Timpani, playing as an individual, struggled in her final round but still managed to finish tied for 9th with Portland State's Sarah Tiller at 231.

Junior Jess Carlyon carded her best finish of the season and the second-highest of her career by finishing in a tie for 11th at 234. Freshman Kimberly McCready shot 83-74-79-236, good for a tie for 13th.

Playing as individuals, senior Katie Cunningham posted

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Falling Down

Oregon suffers through a season of disappointment that ends with a loss in the Pac-10 Tournament

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

The look on Andrea Bills' face summarized the entire season.

After an 82-57 loss to California in the opening round of the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament on Friday, the junior center displayed a look that screamed of pain and disappointment during post-game interviews.

The Ducks' leading scorer and rebounder had just been held to four points and one rebound in 15 foul and injury-plagued minutes.

"It's very disappointing because I know my teammates are looking for me to be there," Bills said after a week-long battle with a left ankle injury. "I just tried to go out there and play as hard as I could."

Bills' effort epitomized Oregon's 2003-04 season, where nothing went right for the Ducks, no matter how hard they tried.

After starting the season with five consecutive wins and earning a spot in the top 25, Oregon experienced a series of painful events that quickly ended its hopes of being an elite team.

The most traumatic incident occurred Dec. 2 when senior forward Cathrine Kraayeveld tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee. The loss of Kraayeveld was catastrophic for Oregon; the 6-foot-4 All-American candidate was the Ducks' leading scorer, rebounder, three-point shooter and shot blocker.



Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Like Eleanor Haring against California, Oregon was often knocked down this season. The Golden Bears defeated the Ducks, 82-75.

"We were doing a post drill, and I just went to cut and (my knee) locked on me and it kind of gave way," Kraayeveld said at the time. "... I was going and all of the sudden I was on the ground."

Teammates felt the added pressure of her absence immediately. The Ducks were blown out by an undersized Portland team Dec. 4 in what proved to be the first of many frustrating losses.

Sophomore Carolyn Ganes felt the pressure to produce in Kraayeveld's absence more than anyone. The Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, native was inserted into the starting lineup against the Pilots but managed only nine points and two rebounds.

Oregon appeared to regroup quickly, winning its next three games, albeit against marginal competition. The Ducks, however, lost their next five games and quickly fell out of contention for the Pac-10 title. The losing streak included a 61-57 loss to California in the Ducks' conference opener and a 63-57 loss to UCLA in which Oregon led by as many as 14 in the second half.

After winning its first conference game of the year against Oregon State on Jan. 10, Oregon lost eight of its next 11 games, including a 95-50 loss at Washington on Jan. 15. The 45-point defeat was the third-worst in school history.

The following week, Chelsea Wagner shot the lights out in McArthur Court, drilling a combined 10 three-pointers in games against Arizona and Arizona State. Despite the Springfield native's sharpshooting, Oregon dropped both games after blowing late leads.

What made the sophomore guard's performance more amazing

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