

SPORTS

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Best bet
NCAA Basketball
Oklahoma State vs. Texas
6:30 p.m., ESPN2

Thursday, March 11, 2004

Softball's slow start gives win to Canada

The Ducks lost an exhibition game to Team Canada, 7-2, their home opener at Howe

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

It started with a small spark — a single by catcher Jenn Poore in Oregon's first at bat — but for four innings Oregon couldn't put any-
DUCK SOFTBALL

thing together.

Then, in the bottom of the fifth, the Ducks breathed some life into their game. Second baseman Suzie Barnes was hit by a pitch on a 0-2 count for Oregon's third baserunner of the game.

Two outs later, on a 1-0 count, right fielder Dani Baird hit a shot over the left field fence that elicited cheers from the Duck bench before Canada's Alison Bradley had time to decide if she should chase it.

The two-run home run ended up being all Oregon could muster, losing a 7-2 decision to Team Canada, the Canadian Olympic team, in an exhibition game Wednesday at Howe Field.

"We started too slow," Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "We're disappointed with our start, but I really am pleased with how we ended — Dani's hit, brought a lot of passion just with how she plays. I hope that we move forward and grow from this experience, it was just disappointing how we got started."

The game was Oregon's first home game of the season and the first chance for Duck fans to get a look at the young team, which is 17-5 this season.

The 420 fans in attendance didn't have much Oregon success to cheer, however, because Canada's Kaila Holtz threw a two-hit complete game.

"Canada's a good ballclub, but Canada's not USA," Arendsen said. "I think it's a team we should have played a very close game with. I don't know whether or not we should have beaten them, but we should have been close."

The Ducks — ranked No. 16 and No. 14 in the ESPN.com/USA Softball and National Fastpitch Coaches Association/USA Today Division I Polls, respectively — have lost two straight exhibition games to Olympic teams. Oregon lost 7-0 to Team USA Saturday before the Ducks hosted Team Canada on Wednesday.

Baird is the only Duck to have a hit against each team. She had Oregon's lone hit in the shutout by Team USA, while Baird and Poore accounted for the two hits against Team Canada.

"I was kind of upset because I got tricked in my first at-bat," Baird said. "She threw me a rise ball and I bit at it. So I moved back in the box so I could see the rise ball a little better. I just saw my pitch and drove it over the fence."

The Ducks kept everything they threw at Canada in the field, giving up 10 hits, eight basehits and two doubles.

Every player on the Oregon squad —
Turn to **SOFTBALL**, page 14

Ducks, Cal back at even



Adam Amato Senior Photographer

Luke Jackson and the Ducks need to win the Pac-10 Tournament to earn a berth in the NCAA Championships.

Oregon and the Golden Bears meet for the third time this season with the NCAA Tournament on the line

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

Time for the rubber match.

Oregon and California split the season series, with each team winning at home, and both teams meet today at approximately 2:50 p.m. in the second game of the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament at Staples Center in Los Angeles.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

ment at Staples Center in Los Angeles.

At stake is more than just bragging rights.

The Ducks and Golden Bears both need a win in the worst way. If Oregon wants to head to the NCAA Tournament for three straight years, it must win its first game of the tournament, along with its second and third.

California (13-14 overall, 9-9 Pac-10), meanwhile, must go to the championship game of the conference tournament just to earn a 0.500 or better record and be eligible for the NIT.

That makes for an interesting first game of the tournament for both teams.

"I like this matchup," Oregon forward Luke Jackson said. "I think we have a good game plan going into this game, and I think it's going to be

Turn to **CAL**, page 14

Pac-10 wide open for surprises

Even with Stanford as the favorite, any team has one final chance to earn a berth into the NCAA Tournament

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

The men's Pacific-10 Conference Tournament is full of surprises this year.

Stanford lost its first game recently, Washington finished second after beginning 0-5 and Washington State made the tournament for the first time in 14 years.

Arizona and the Cardinal are both automatics to the NCAA Tournament. Washington will likely make it as well for winning 12 of its last 13 games.

Any one of the eight teams in the Pac-10 Tournament has a chance to advance to the Big Dance with the automatic bid that comes from winning the tournament crown.

Games begin this afternoon, starting with No. 1 Stanford against No. 8 Washington State, followed by No. 4 California taking on No. 5 Oregon. The championship game is set for 3:15 p.m. Saturday at the Staples Center.

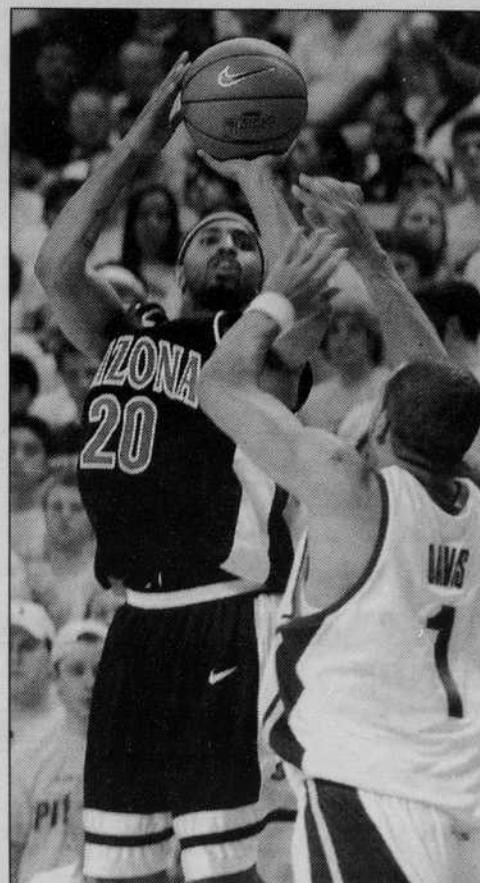
1. Stanford (26-1 overall, 17-1 Pac-10)

The Cardinal captured its 11th Pac-10 crown — the fourth in six years — and is clearly the tournament favorite.

Stanford is no longer undefeated after being upset by Washington, which ended the Cardinal's 26-game winning streak.

Junior Josh Childress leads the Cardinal with 15.2 points per game and was the first Stanford player to ever

Turn to **PAC-10**, page 14



Danielle Hickey Photo Editor

Arizona's Salim Stoudamire (20) has averaged 25 points per game during the past five games.

Tennis struggles to find rhythm

The Oregon men want more consistency; the women look to break their losing streak

By Alex Tam
Freelance Reporter

After a disappointing weekend of play, Oregon men's tennis head coach Chris Russell is trying to preach two attributes to his team: detail and desire.
DUCK TENNIS

The 45th-ranked Ducks (7-4 overall) were riding high with confidence after defeating rival Washington for only the sixth time in the school's history. However, instead of continuing that strong play, the men suffered a setback when they lost two matches on their home court. One of those losses included a 5-2 defeat against No. 51 Georgia Tech on Sunday.

"Hopefully the guys are just concerned with trying to get better," Russell said. "Not just technically, but I think they are going to have to take some responsibility for their intensity level getting better."

Russell said his team needs to maintain the high energy level from the Washington match. The men want that victory to be the standard for their quality of play every weekend.

"They've shown people in this community and other college teams what they're capable of doing," Russell said. "That (Husky) match so far has been the exception. Hopefully they can make it the norm. Right now, they haven't done that."

One area of concern was doubles play. The Ducks lost four of the six doubles matches against Georgia Tech and Minnesota to lose the first dual point in each match. Oregon has yet to win a dual match this year when losing the doubles point. After having to face a pair of 1-0 deficits, the men were pressured to win the majority of the six singles matches, which did not happen.

The bottom half of the singles lineup has struggled to find any consistency through the season. The men have compiled a 14-16 singles record at the No. 4 through No. 6 positions.

The top three spots, though, are solidified between juniors Sven Swinnen and Manuel Kost and sophomore Thomas Bieri. Swinnen, ranked No. 92 in the nation, has played strong tennis all year long in earning a 10-1 singles record.

"(Swinnen) has been a bright spot consistently," Russell said. "He's really come out ready to play."

The men will take this weekend off and return to action when they travel to Portland March 23 and to No. 29 California March 26.

Women Still Confident

The Oregon women have lost five straight dual matches after starting the year winning nine straight. However, all five losses occurred to top 15 teams on the road, including top-ranked Stanford.

The 23rd-ranked Ducks (9-5 overall,
Turn to **TENNIS**, page 14