

PAC-10

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be named Pac-10 Player of the Year.

Stanford faces Washington State, which nearly upset the Cardinal on its final road trip. If the Cardinal wins, it would face the winner of the Oregon-California game.

2. Washington (17-10, 12-6)

Washington posted its best conference finish since a second-place showing in 1986. And the Huskies have momentum on their side.

After beginning the season 0-5 in conference play, the Huskies went on

to win 12 of their last 13 Pac-10 games. Sophomore guard Nate Robinson leads the Huskies into their matchup against No. 7 UCLA at 6:15 p.m. today. Robinson is averaging 12.4 points and 1.7 steals per game.

3. Arizona (19-8, 11-7)

Arizona, which isn't used to finishing any lower than second in the Pac-10, will face off against No. 6 USC at approximately 8:45 tonight, or 30 minutes after the conclusion of the Washington-UCLA game.

The Wildcats are led by sophomore Andre Iguodala, who is on pace to become the first Wildcat to ever lead the team in rebounding

(8.8 rpg), assists (5.15 apg) and steals (1.63 spg). Junior guard Salim Stoudamire is averaging 25 points per game over the last five games.

4. California (13-14, 9-9)

Cal enters the tournament on a two-game losing streak. But with freshman star Leon Powe, who was named Freshman of the Year, averaging 9.5 rebounds and 15 points per game, the Bears have a chance.

Cal faces Oregon in the first round. The two teams split the series in the regular season.

5. Oregon (14-11, 9-9)

Oregon enters the tournament

with some momentum after winning its final two games at home. Senior Luke Jackson will lead the way as one of six players in the nation this season to carry his team in points, rebounds and assists.

6. Southern California (13-14, 8-10)

USC is going to need a huge game from senior guard Desmon Farmer, who ranks fourth on USC's career scoring list, to get over Arizona. In USC's win over the Wildcats, Farmer scored a career-high 40 points.

7. UCLA (11-16, 7-11)

The Bruins will have their work

cut out for them in the first round when they face a hot Washington team. UCLA has lost its last five games.

8. Washington State (13-15, 7-11)

The Cougars have tallied seven Pac-10 wins this season after winning just six of its last 44 conference games entering the season. It is a tough matchup for Washington State to open up against Stanford, but the Cougars nearly upset the Cardinal a week ago.

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CAL

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an interesting game, especially on a neutral site."

If there was ever any two teams that resembled one another, and conversely knew more about one another, it would be the Ducks and Bears.

Oregon (14-11, 9-9) took advantage of McArthur Court in the first meeting between the teams. The Ducks won, 68-56, keeping Pac-10 Freshman of the Year Leon Powe to 12 points and Amit Tamir to two on 0 of 8 shooting.

Nearly a month later, the Bears turned the table on the Ducks, winning in Berkeley, 85-81, in overtime. Powe

learned some things from his first game, posting 20 points and 11 rebounds.

But the Ducks limited Tamir to five points in the second game of the season. A key for Oregon will be doing the same today.

"The key is to not let him touch the ball," Oregon forward Jay Anderson said. "In the past, we've tried to do that and he's been able to get open shots, get on a roll and start hitting shots with guys in his face.

"This year, they have another option in the post, which kind of takes away from him a little. I think the biggest key for us is to not let him hit that trailing three-point shot and get on a roll. Once he starts going, he's pretty tough to stop."

As well as the Ducks have played defensively in their games against California, the team's offense also has stepped up. In Oregon's win, the Ducks shot 60.9 percent from the field in the first half, allowing them to jump up by 17 heading into halftime.

In the second game, Oregon started slow but caught California in the second half behind the play of freshman Aaron Brooks. The point guard scored all of his 16 points in the second half.

Oregon knows it needs to mesh its offense and defense to take advantage of California. That's especially the case because each knows the other pretty well.

"Any time you play someone a third time, things will be a lot more bogged down, in terms of them understanding

what we're trying to do and us understanding what they're trying to do," Oregon head coach Emie Kent said. "They really come down to energy, making free throws, making layups and those types of easy buckets that present themselves over the course of a ball game."

The Ducks know the Golden Bears are just the first step of the tournament, despite the focus on California. Unlike the past two seasons, when Oregon knew it probably had secured a bid into the NCAA Tournament prior to the Pac-10 Tournament, this season is different.

The Ducks are guaranteed of being eligible for the NIT. But they don't want to be relegated to the lesser of the two tournaments.

Therefore, they need to win three games in three days. California is just the start.

"Nothing would make this season more complete than winning the Pac-10 Tournament, for me," Jackson said. "Each game from now on, you have to go on and look at it like it's the last game. So you don't really want to think about the NIT and give into that."

"You just want to say, 'this is our last shot,' and that's how we're going to go down and feel like that; pretty much with our backs against the wall and nothing to lose."

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SOFTBALL

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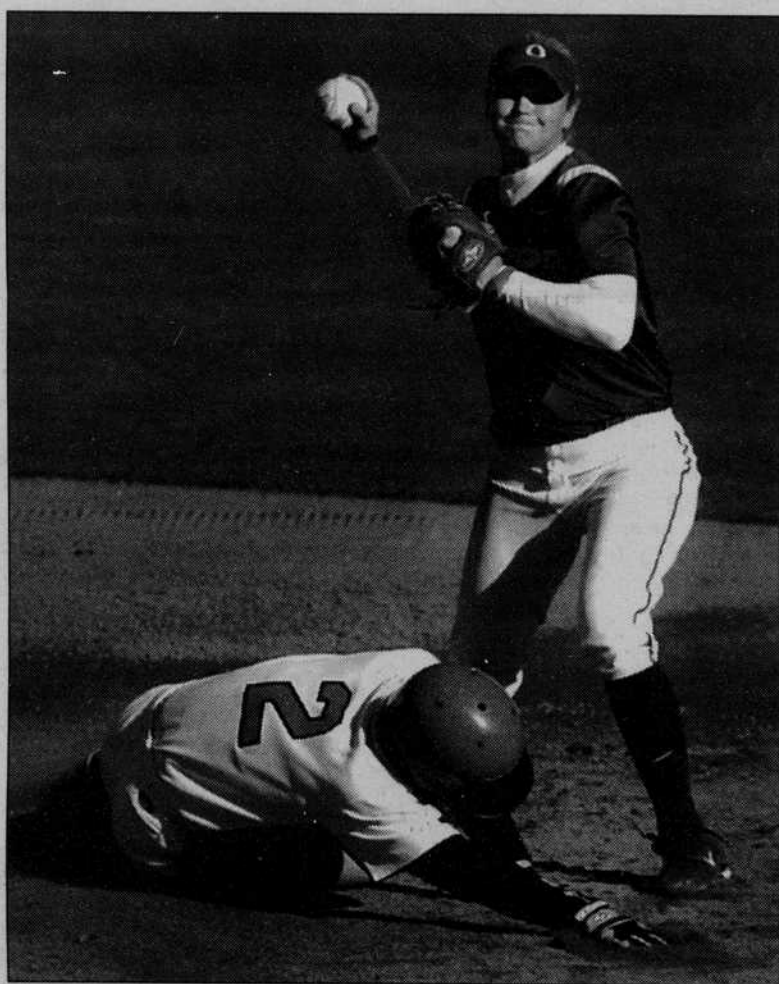
minus pitcher Ani Nyhus, who was suited up for Team Canada — played in the game. Pitcher Anissa Meashintubby, who has a shoulder injury and is questionable for this weekend, pinch ran in the bottom of the seventh after Heather Munson pinch hit for Kristi Leiter. Munson drew a walk on seven pitches. Meashintubby stole a base during the next at-bat.

Oregon's Amy Harris started the game, giving up six hits and five runs in two-plus innings. After she gave up two hits to start the third, Lindsey Kontra came into the game in relief. Kontra allowed four hits and two runs in five innings.

"It was good to get some work in against a really good competitive team," Kontra said. "It was nice to have the home crowd out, supporting you no matter what."

The Ducks now head to Las Vegas for the UNLV Tournament. They will play four games, two Friday and two Saturday. After a break for finals week, the squad will spend its spring break in Eugene, playing seven games in seven days. They open that week March 21 with a doubleheader against Missouri.

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Adam Amato Senior Photographer

Second baseman Erin Goodell and the Ducks lost their first home opener in three years with a 7-2 defeat by Team Canada on Wednesday at Howe Field.

TENNIS

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2-4 Pacific-10 Conference) hope to get back to their winning ways when they return for their last home games of the year.

"We just got to keep playing," Oregon head coach Nils Schyllander said. "We're not playing that bad, but we're through our toughest part of the schedule."

The women, though, have only won one dual match point in their last four matches. Junior Daria Panova won that point when she defeated UCLA's Jackie Carleton, 6-2 and 7-6 (7-4) in a 6-1 loss to the Bruins on Sunday.

The Ducks host eighth-ranked

Washington Friday at 1:30 p.m. and No. 59 Washington State on

"We just got to keep playing. We're not playing that bad, but we're through our toughest part of the schedule."

Nils Schyllander
Oregon tennis head coach

Saturday at the Student Tennis Center.

Alex Tam is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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