Women's golf to face top teams at PING/ASU Invitational today

The Ducks look to capture their third tournament title of the year in Arizona

by Brian Smith
Freelance Reporter

The time for the Oregon women's golf team is now.

The Ducks will face what is easily the toughest tournament field of the year when they tee off today at the 2004 PING/ASU Invitational, held at the par-72, 6,230-yard Karsten Golf Course in Tempe, Ariz.

13 of the 17 teams in the field are ranked in the nation's top 35 according to this week's Golfweek/Sagarin rankings. Six of the top-ten teams in the country, including second-ranked UCLA, defending champion at this event and fifth-ranked California, No. 6 New Mexico, No. 9 USC and No. 10 Arizona, will give the Ducks all the talent they can handle.

Considering that the Pac-10 championships are two weeks away, the PING/ASU will give the Ducks experience playing an NCAA-type tournament field, something that has passed them by in the spring season so far. The Ducks have finished second and first in their two tournaments of the spring, both coming against fields that lacked the depth and talent of this week's PING/ASU.

Nevertheless, the Ducks will be looking to capture their third team title of the year for only the second time in school history.

The Ducks won three out of the four tournaments they entered in 1996, finishing as high as No. 6 in the rankings, and completed the season with an all-time high showing of seventh in the NCAA Championships.

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The Ducks will also look to secure their third-straight top-five finish of the spring. Recent finishes at the PING/ASU do not bode well for the Ducks, however, as the last top-ten came in 1998 and the Ducks finished last year in 15th place.

A number of Ducks will look to continue their hot play this week. Sophomores Erin Andrews and Michelle Timpani have already taken medalist honors in the 2003-2004 season.

Andrews opened with her win at the Lady Vandal Invitational while Timpani's victory came at last week's Colby Invitational. Timpani is by far playing the most surprising golf of the year.

Prior to her consecutive top-ten finishes in the past two tournaments, Timpani's highest finish was a couple of 42nds last year.

Andrews has struggled in the spring, not placing in the top-20 in either event. In any case, she remains one of the Duck's most consistent performers and will look to regain her top form on a course that is expected to yield low numbers if the weather is good.

Fellow sophomore Therese Wenslow is coming off another top-15 finish and will look to increase that streak to four. Juniors Jess Carlyon and Johnna Nealy have top-15 finishes under their belts, and freshman Kimberly McCready, who rounds out the contingent playing in Arizona, looks to secure her second straight top-15 finish as well.

Individually, the player to watch is UCLA's Charlotte Mayorkas. The junior All-American, who is ranked second nationally, is the defending champion and leads the Bruins in scoring average at 71.9 strokes per round.

Mayorkas has two individual titles so far this year, and, in addition, boasts six consecutive top-10 finishes.

The rest of the tournament field includes No. 12 Washington, No.16 Tulsa, No.17 Texas, No. 24 Stanford, No. 28 Pepperdine, No. 33 TCU, No. 34 Arizona State, New Mexico State, Northern Arizona, San Jose State.

The first round tees off today at 8 a.m. MST.

Brian Smith is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

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the women's program behind a new philosophy with more emphasis on the field competition.

Five more Ducks are scheduled to compete in other field events throughout today. Kriz's sister, junior Rachael Kriz, will participate in the javelin after earning a regional qualifying mark of 137-2 at the Stanford Invitational.

Redshirt junior Bree Fuqua will lead the Ducks at the discus, along with senior Jill Hoxmeier. Fuqua paced the women last week after placing third in discus at 158-09.

The Oregon women are looking at this meet as preparation for next weekend's Pepsi Invitational at Hayward Field when Colorado, Minnesota and Washington visit Eugene.

In other events, host Texas enjoyed success on the track. Texas senior Jodi Jones won the 10,000-meter race in her first time competing in the event. She told TexasSports.com that preparation from her coaches during the week helped her win.

"When I took the lead I noticed the pace was slowing down," Jones told TexasSports.com. "I didn't feel comfortable but I thought I could keep the pace and it turns out I did."

Contact the sports reporter at alextam@dailyemerald.com.

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