

Civil War rivalry takes flight in Corvallis

The Ducks search for their first series victory of the Pac-10 season with two games against Oregon State

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

This year, the Civil War softball battle has no official bearing on the Civil War Cup — Oregon has already clinched the victory, 9-6, with the two-point softball match the only one left on the docket.

Instead, the rivalry that resumes at

2 p.m. today in Corvallis and ends with Saturday's 2 p.m. game will either put space between No. 14 Oregon and No. 15 Oregon State or tighten up the state's contributions to the Pacific-10 Conference.

"We know they want nothing more than to beat us," said Oregon second baseman Erin Goodell. "There's nothing more disappointing than losing in the bottom of the seventh inning. That's just going to make them even more ambitious to go out there and beat us."

The schools opened the Pac-10 season March 26 at Howe Field, one

week before any other teams played within the conference.

Oregon State (32-11 overall, 1-3 Pac-10) held an 8-3 lead on the rainy Friday going into the bottom of the seventh inning. The Ducks (29-9, 3-1) batted through the order to tie the game at eight. When shortstop Breanne Sabol came up to bat for the second time in the inning, she hit a single to left center that scored the winning run for Oregon.

"We've beaten them already," catcher Jenn Poore said. "We came from a big deficit to win. We know that we can win these next two games this

weekend. We've just got to take the momentum into this weekend."

The momentum that Oregon has is not only from the win against Oregon State. The Ducks are 6-2 in their past eight games, including a five-game winning streak last week that boasted wins against No. 3 California and No. 11 Stanford, as well as a doubleheader sweep of Portland State.

"We're feeling really good about how we're playing right now," Goodell said. "Confidence is a key in this game and we have it right now. I think we have a lot going for us."

Oregon is off to its best conference start, 3-1, since the 1989 season. The one loss was a 6-1 defeat at the hands of Stanford on Sunday.

The two games this weekend close the regular season series between Oregon and Oregon State before either plays four other Pac-10 squads. Neither the Ducks nor the Beavers have faced Washington, UCLA, Arizona or Arizona State this season.

"The first thing we're trying to do is win a series," Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "That's always the first sign of success — when you can win a series against a Pac-10 opponent. Going to our arch-rival's place is pretty hard. We're going to have to be sharp."

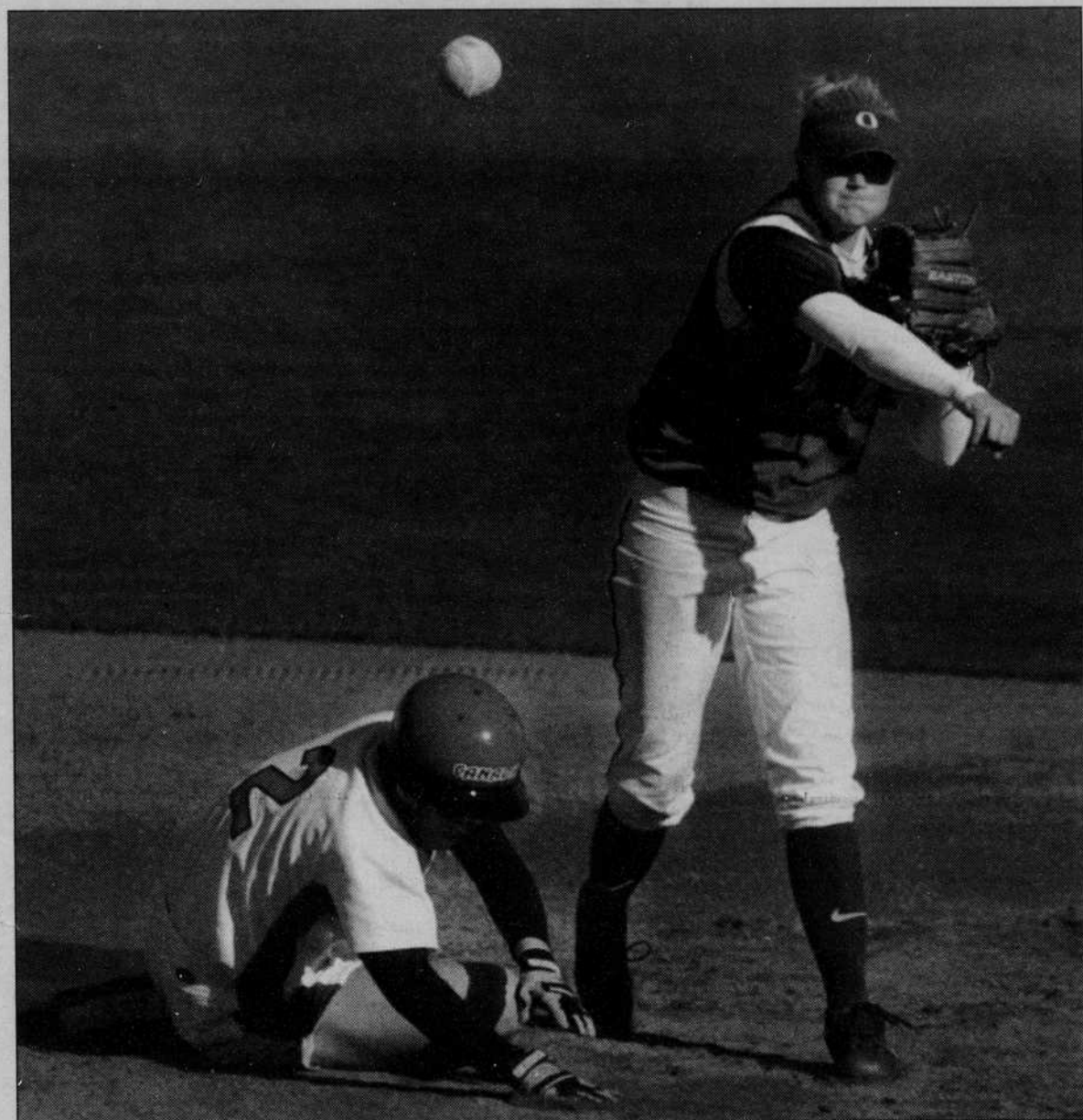
The Ducks were winless in Corvallis for seven seasons before Arendsen came to town last season. Oregon won the sole game at Oregon State in 2003, 10-2.

The Beavers have held resentment from last year's blowout win as well as from the last-minute loss two weeks ago. While the Ducks have last season's results on their minds, they also want to rewrite the end of the 2003 season, when Oregon fell one game short of the Women's College World Series with a 6-4 loss to Louisiana-Lafayette.

"We think about last year," Goodell said. "It was kind of devastating for us just missing the World Series. We're trying to go one game at a time, but we still have our long-term goals in mind. We want to be there this year."

Before Oregon can make plans for Oklahoma City, the site of this year's World Series, the Ducks must take it one game at a time. Next up: Oregon State.

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Adam Amato Senior Photographer

Erin Goodell and the Ducks close the regular season series against the Beavers this weekend, just six games into the Pac-10 season.

SPORTS BRIEF

Gwynn calls for tougher drug-testing

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Tony Gwynn was quick to point out that he is just a college baseball coach now, but he was critical Thursday of his former major-league colleagues for not pushing for a stiffer drug-testing policy.

Gwynn retired in 2001 with 3,141 hits and a .338 batting average, and is eligible to enter the Hall of Fame in 2007.

Gwynn, 43, the coach of San Diego State's baseball team, was at the Air Force Academy for the first of three games.

Thursday's game was postponed because of the weather, but before it, Gwynn voiced concerns for the game he played for 20 years. He said baseball needs a more stringent drug-testing policy.

"Everybody thinks it's the union (opposing stiffer drug-testing)," said Gwynn, who is in his second season as the Aztecs' coach. "It's the players. The players run the union. (Players

Association executive director) Don Fehr doesn't run the union. If the players don't want it, they are going to tell Don Fehr they don't want it and it's not going to happen. ... The players run the union. The players are the ones who make the decisions."

Baseball's drug-testing policy, adopted in 2002, does not call for the suspension or identification of first-time offenders — just counseling. One-year suspensions await five-time offenders.

After balking at first, the player's union has recently agreed to consider stiffening its rules because of pressure

from Congress and President Bush.

Bush was critical of steroids in sports during January's State of the Union address, and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., told Fehr and baseball commissioner Bud Selig at a hearing last month that "the status quo is not acceptable."

Gwynn spoke out about drugs in baseball a year ago, estimating 50 percent of position players use amphetamines, in an interview with The New York Times.

— Todd Jacobson
The Gazette (KRT)

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