

Ducks seek to secure NCAA Regional bid

The Ducks hope for key performances from their trio of sophomores in Stanford this weekend

By Brian Smith
Freelance Reporter

The Oregon men's golf team doesn't need any more pressure. They're about to get some more.

DUCK GOLF

Playing in the most important tournament of the year, the Ducks' post-season chances will largely be decided this weekend at the U.S. Intercollegiate, held at the par-71, 6,835-yard Stanford Golf Course in California.

The goal and the situation remain the same. The Ducks are on the

outside looking in for the remaining three automatic bids to the NCAA West Regional next month. And like last week's ASU Thunderbird Invitational, the Ducks will go head-to-head with many of the teams they are currently chasing.

The group Oregon will compete against includes UC-Irvine, UC-Riverside, Long Beach State, Oregon State, Pacific, San Jose State and Washington State.

"We need to beat all those teams to give ourselves a chance at the regional," Oregon head coach Steve Nosler said. "And we need to understand that if we make good shots and keep the ball in play, we should be able to do that. It still may not be enough, but we will certainly do everything we can to at least have a chance."

The Ducks will not be the only team looking to improve their NCAA chances.

"This tournament could really help put us in position for the NCAAAs," Oregon State head coach Brian Watts said. "This is a great course where you must manage the ball to be able to score well, and I think our squad is prepared to shoot some low scores."

Low scores will most certainly be in order as the Ducks travel south for the second tournament in a row. This past week's ASU Thunderbird saw eventual champion Arizona State finish at 46-under as a team, shattering the tournament record. One of the weaknesses for the Ducks this year has been the inability to go low for more than one round, which the team will need to do in order to compete with the talented field this weekend.

The Ducks have been receiving timely performances from their co-captain Mike Sica. Sica, a senior, has played his best golf of the year, including under-par finishes, in

his last two tournaments.

"Mike has played well at Stanford in the past and is usually very comfortable on that golf course," Nosler said. "I also think he understands that it's becoming do-or-die time for him as a senior, and his play of late has reflected that."

Along with Sica, the Ducks will send sophomores Justin St. Clair, Kyle Johnson and Gregg LaVoie. Freshman Matt Ma will round out the Oregon contingent.

The rest of the tournament field includes No. 3 UCLA, No. 7 Texas, No. 17 California, Fresno State, Portland, San Diego, San Diego State, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Stanford.

The Ducks will tee off for the first of 36 holes at 8 a.m. on Saturday, with the tournament concluding Sunday.

Brian Smith is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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teams in the NCAA.

"UCLA, 0-4 in the conference? You've got to be kidding," Arendsen said. "They're the defending national champions. We just hope they can struggle another weekend and take out their frustrations on somebody else next week."

The Bruins face Oregon's travel partner Oregon State on Friday.

Regardless of other matchups, the Ducks are confident heading into the weekend. Their first goal is to shake off Saturday's 7-4 loss to Oregon State.

"We're a little upset about Saturday's loss, but we feel really confident with what we know about Washington and UCLA," second baseman Erin Goodell said. "We know we can win all three games. Our competition is going to get tougher and tougher. We know we have the ability to play with anybody, so that's going to be a key factor is having the confidence."

It is a formula that has started to take hold in the Oregon dugout.

"We're going to go out there and try to be the best Oregon team that we can be," Arendsen said. "That's all we can do."

Contact the senior sports reporter at mindirice@dailyemerald.com.




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