

Ducks search for victories at Pac-10 championships

The Ducks look to improve on their seventh place finish in last year's event

By Brian Smith
Freelance Reporter

The Oregon men's golf team goes into today's opening round of the Pacific-10 Conference Championships knowing the situation remains the same: The Ducks are still on the outside looking in.

Needing one more solid finish to have a chance at an NCAA West Regional bid, the Ducks will square off against some of the nation's elite at the par-72, 7,412-yard North

DUCK GOLF

Course of the Gallery at Dove Mountain in Tucson, Ariz.

"The Pac-10 is always one of the best conferences in the country and this year is no exception," Oregon head coach Steve Nosler said. "UCLA might be the best team in the country, but you've got another four or five teams who are good enough to win it. We'd like to compete as hard

as we can and then the score will take care of itself."

UCLA is indeed one of the best teams in country, according to this week's Golfweek rankings. The defending champions are ranked third in the nation and are the prohibitive favorite heading into this week's tournament. The Bruins should receive stiff competition from No. 5 Arizona State, No. 8 Arizona, No. 12 Southern California, No. 18 California and No. 25 Washington.

For the Ducks, the goal is simpler. A strong finish could possibly elevate them into one of the 12 automatic bids for regionals. Currently, the Ducks are the 13th-ranked team in the West region, and if the standings hold, Oregon would be the first team not to receive a bid.

"We probably need to finish fifth or so to get a couple of quality wins," Nosler said.

The Ducks will be competing in a nontraditional six-count-five format instead of the normal five-count-four. The Oregon contingent includes senior Mike Sica; sophomores Justin St. Clair, last year's top finisher Gregg LaVoie; Kyle Johnson; and freshmen Matt Ma and Dustin Pewarchuk.

St. Clair has been Oregon's most

consistent golfer this season with a 72.9 stroke average and three top-20 finishes — including last week's tie for 19th at the U.S. Intercollegiate in Stanford.

Co-Captain Sica has been playing his best golf of late, finishing with a career-best tie for fourth at the Duck Invitational last month. Sica also recorded consecutive under par finishes for the first time in his career.

Individually, the players that should contend for the title are Arizona's Chris Nallen, Washington's Brock Mackenzie, and Arizona State's Chez Reavie.

Reavie is the 15th-ranked player in the country and is 41-under par in his last eight tournaments. Mackenzie, Washington's senior captain, has six top-10 finishes in nine tournaments this year, and is a finalist for the Hogan Award, which is presented annually to the nation's top men's golfer. Nallen has a season-stroke average of 69.78, and has three individual titles this season.

The teams will play 36 holes today and will conclude the 72-hole event Wednesday.

Brian Smith is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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of the West Coast's to talents. Performing at the highest level was difficult, however, as winds gusted above three meters per second at times.

"Other than the 5,000 (the meet's final event), everything on the oval was going to be affected by the wind," Oregon head coach Martin Smith said. "Probably by this time of the year that can get a little frustrating. But I think you get good competition and you take that into account and you build off that. The wind was a factor, but it can be windy at a championship meet, so you don't use that as an excuse and you turn your attention to competing."

Along with Scherer, other winners on the track included freshman Travis Ramme in the morning session of the 100 (10.99w, w:2.4), sophomore Eric Mitchum in the 400 hurdles (52.30) and freshman Mike McGrath in the 800 (1:51.42).

Along with winning the 100, Ramme, a Eugene native, shaved .51 seconds off his season best in the morning session of the 200 (ninth, 22.19w, w: 2.5).

Mitchum's victory in the 400 hurdles was his second at Hayward Field in three weeks. The Calumet City, Ill. native finished 1.07 seconds better than teammate Brandon Holliday (third, 53.37), who had been battling a case of food poisoning.

McGrath's time dipped under the

Pacific-10 Conference standard (1:51.44) and was just enough to edge Weber State's Brad Osguthorp (second, 1:51.47).

In the field, Leonidas Watson won the triple jump (51 feet, 1 3/4 inches, w:2.7) with his second-best performance of the outdoor season. The junior transfer from St. Louis Community College bettered 50 feet on two of his three jumps, despite battling the wind and built up adrenaline from competing in the 4 x 100-meter relay earlier in the day.

Watson had so much momentum built up on his approach that he missed the board by three feet on his first attempt.

"The wind (made it difficult) Watson said. "After the 4 x 100 I'm so juiced up and I'm running down the runway so fast that my turnover is making me short of the board. I had to move up at least eight feet from my original mark."

Sophomore Jeff Lindsey won the high jump (7-0 1/2) for the second time in three weeks at Hayward Field. The Mansfield, Texas native cleared 7-1 3/4 during the Pepsi Team Invitational on April 10.

Also in the field, senior Trevor Woods took second in the pole vault (17-1) and improved on his previous 2004 outdoor best of 16-9 1/4.

In relay action, the Oregon combination of Travis Anderson, Watson, Brian Paysinger and Ryan Gilliam took first in the 4 x 100 (40.72).

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