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Danielle Hickey Photo Editor

Oregon's Ashley Richards leads the Ducks with a .322 batting average, 10 doubles, eight home runs and 27 RBIs. The junior from Richland, Wash., has started all 49 games this season, primarily at third base.

No. 10 Oregon hosts Portland State at Howe

The Ducks break into the top 10 as they prepare for two nonconference games at 2 p.m. today at Howe Field

By **Mindi Rice**
Senior Sports Reporter

A 1-2 weekend against two teams ranked in the top 10 kept Oregon moving ahead in the polls.

Instead of dropping from the No. 11 spot the Ducks held last week, Oregon moved up in the ESPN.com/USA Softball Poll released Tuesday.

Now, the No. 10 Ducks round out six Pacific-10 Conference teams ranked in the top 10.

"Strange, isn't it?" Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "Strange that we break the top

10 when we lose two out of three. I believe that we have been a top 10 team for a few weeks now. It's great for promotional stuff and recruiting, but ultimately what counts is, can you win when you get to regionals?"

Today, the Ducks (35-14 overall, 9-6 Pac-10) take their No. 10 ranking into Howe Field for a nonconference doubleheader at 2 p.m. against Portland State (19-34 overall, 10-10 Pacific Coast Softball Conference).

"The games against Portland State are really big for bringing people ready to play for the rest of our games for the rest of the season," pitcher Ani Nyhus said. "We can't look over Portland State. We had two really close games against them in Portland."

Oregon needs to win one of today's two

games to win the state competition. The Ducks took two of three from Oregon State and have already taken two games from Portland State. On Wednesday, the Vikings upset the then-No. 18 Beavers, 4-2, for their first win against a top 25 team this season.

DUCK SOFTBALL

The two games against Oregon are the final games of the season for Portland State.

"We can't underestimate them," second baseman Erin Goodell said. "Those are two games that we need to win. They've got nothing to lose, so they're going to be coming in here ready to win. We can't let that happen."

Last year, the Ducks swept the Vikings in four games, shutting out Portland State in both

games in Portland, 4-0 and 5-0. The Vikings managed two runs during each game in Eugene, but Oregon made sure to stay ahead of Portland State, 7-2 and 3-2.

Portland State head coach Teri Mariani makes sure the Vikings are ready every year for their games against Oregon State and Oregon, giving her players the chance to beat top 25 teams each year.

"Their pitchers shut us down when we were in Portland," Arendsen said. "We have the chance to get momentum back offensively. I'd like to see more consistency offensively (against Portland State)."

When the teams faced off in Portland, Oregon took the doubleheader, 5-2 and 1-0. Nyhus

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Alex Tam
Holding court

Looking for tough? Pole vault provides it

Track and field is the ultimate test of athletics.

It combines all the skills and talents required for every athlete competing in sports. Strength and power are necessary in field events, including the shot put and javelin. Try hurling an elongated stick weighing around a pound and a half at least 175 feet — and do it without throwing your arm out.

Also, only a rare group of athletes are

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Malone assumes team's leadership role



Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Junior Sarah Malone has become Oregon's leader of the track this season.

Team meetings before every meet has helped the Oregon women achieve success this year

By **Alex Tam**
Sports Reporter

Sarah Malone has taken it upon herself to assume a leadership role on the Oregon women's track and field team this season.

As the new era of the women's program began under head coach Martin Smith, Malone believed it was important for the women to realize what being a team really is. She felt it was an element that was nonexistent the past few years.

"I never really had that team feeling the first couple years I was here," Malone said. "I took it upon myself to try to bring this team together."

Since the Pepsi Team Invitational three weeks ago, Malone has organized team meetings a couple days before each meet to discuss goals for the ensuing weekend. The discussion goes around with each athlete sharing their goal for the upcoming competition. They also state how each teammate can help fulfill them, such as help encourage crowd support.

WOMEN'S TRACK

"I started it as a pep rally of sorts," said Malone, a redshirt junior and javelin thrower. "I really think we needed it." The Newberg native has generally received positive feedback from her teammates. The impact of those meetings was immediately felt when the Oregon women won the Pepsi Invite over Colorado, Minnesota and Washington. The Ducks conjured up seven event wins and set seven new personal bests during that meet.

At Hayward Field's Oregon Twilight this past Saturday, the

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