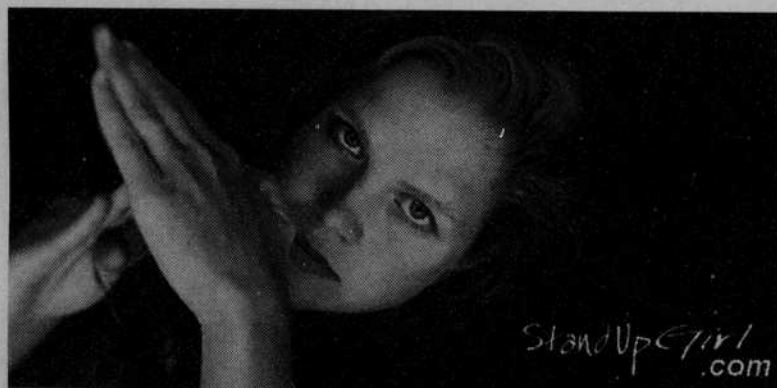


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SPORTS BRIEF

Oregon trio earns berths into NCAA individuals

Oregon tennis players Daria Panova, Dominika Dieskova and Sven Swinnen all earned individual NCAA Championships bids Thursday.

Panova and Dieskova are both set to travel to Athens, Ga., from May 24-29, for the NCAA women's tournament.

Swinnen, and possibly Manuel Kost, who earned an alternate berth, will participate in the men's tournament from May 26-31 in Tulsa, Okla.

For 12th-ranked Panova, the nomination marks her second straight trip on the ultimate postseason journey. She reached the Sweet 16 in 2003, losing to Southern California's Jewel Peterson, 6-2, 6-3.

Panova, a junior who hails from Moscow, is 31-12 this season and is helping lead the Duck women to a berth into the NCAA Team Championships next week.

Dieskova's selection in the field marks the first time in the program's history that a freshman has been chosen. She is 20-14 this season and has been ranked in the top 75 by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association for most of the season.

Dieskova is currently 71st.

"I am so happy for both Daria and Dominika," Oregon women's head coach Nils Schyllander said. "Dominika has worked very hard this season and to make it as a freshman is a huge accomplishment."

Swinnen will represent the Oregon men as the team's only selection.

Junior Swinnen's gone 22-8 this season, jumping from a No. 92 ranking early in the season to 16th in the most recent ITA poll.

"Sven had a tremendous season," Oregon men's head coach Chris Russell said. "He beat some of the top players in the country and was a big part of our success."

Precedent suggests Kost, ranked 66th in the nation after going 18-10 this season, could ultimately earn a full bid. Oregon's Courtney Nagle played in the women's individual championships this past season after being named an alternate.

—Hank Hager

Oregon takes 11th spot after first day of regionals

Oregon will look to move into one of the crucial top eight slots at the NCAA West Regional at Stanford today

By Brian Smith
 Freelance Reporter

The Oregon women's golf team finished the opening round of the NCAA West Regional in 11th place Thursday.

According to the team, that's not such a bad thing.

The Ducks fired a 17-over 305 on the 6,159-yard, par-72 Stanford Golf Course in Stanford, Calif., and currently sit only two strokes back of eighth-place Ohio State. The top eight finishers from the West regional will advance to the NCAA Championships May 18-21 in Auburn, Ala.

"It's a good feeling when you get off to a start like this because it puts us in a position to finish in the top eight," Oregon head coach Shannon Rouillard said. "We still want to play better tomorrow and focus on playing a solid round of golf, but if we could improve a little bit each day from here we should be in pretty good shape."

Despite sending five individuals who had never competed in the regionals, the Ducks couldn't help but feel a bit lucky to be playing a course

the team has seen many times before.

"We've certainly had our ups and downs here," Rouillard said. "But we tried to remember our good rounds and what made us successful in the past in hopes that we would play the course well in the future."

Sophomores Erin Andrews and Therese Wenslow led the Ducks on day one, both of them carding rounds of 2-over 74. Wenslow, looking to rebound from a disappointing showing at the conference championships, carded three birdies, five bogeys and ten pars en route to posting her best individual round at the Stanford course and a tie for 21st.

DUCK GOLF

Andrews, who has struggled since finishing seventh in the first

event of the spring season — the Duck Invitational — regained her top form by draining three consecutive birdies on holes 18, one and two to move to 2-under for the round. Andrews could not keep her momentum coming in — bogeying four out of the last five holes to finish tied with Wenslow.

"Erin and Therese certainly came through for us on a day when we really needed their scores," Rouillard said. "It was really exciting to watch

Erin get those three straight birdies. She was really in control and composed today."

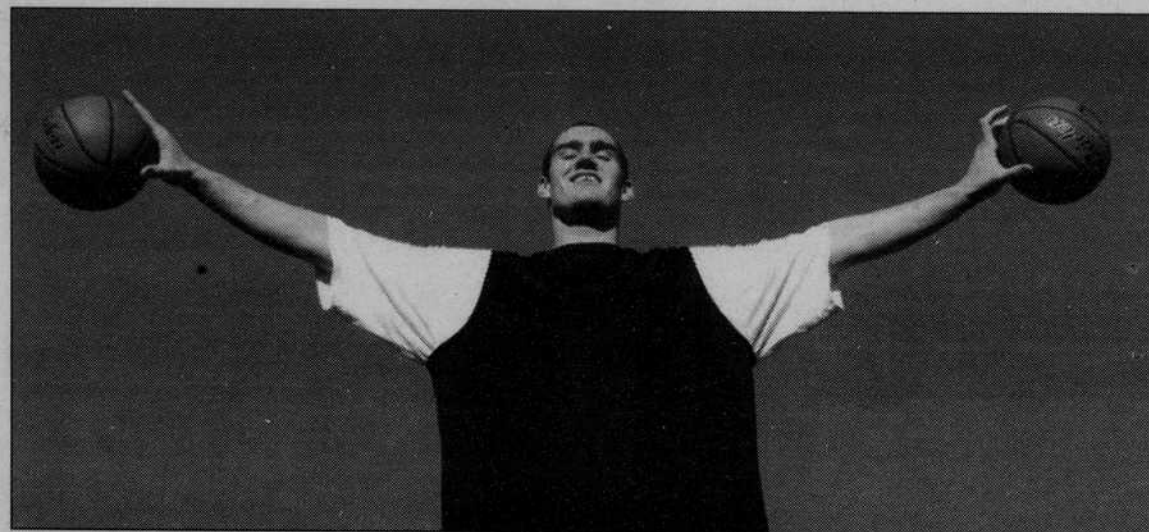
The rest of the Ducks struggled in the first round. Junior Johnna Nealy carded a 6-over 78 to finish in a tie for 55th, while sophomore Michelle Timpani shot a 7-over 79 in the first round to finish tied for 64th. Freshman Kimberly McCready struggled to an 9-over 81 to finish in a tie for 84th.

As a team, No. 2 UCLA grabbed the first round lead by shooting a 6-under 282. The Bruins received a 5-under 67 from individual leader Hannah Jun and a 2-under 70 from teammate Charlotte Mayorkas. No. 3 California finished in second at 2-over 290, while No. 23 Stanford and No. 12 Washington finished in third and fourth, respectively.

Only six strokes separated teams finishing between fifth and 12th. Pepperdine finished fifth with a 300, while favorable scoring conditions in the afternoon helped push lower seeded teams Washington State and Denver into a tie for sixth at 302. Ohio State was eighth, followed by No. 8 Georgia and Texas Tech who tied for ninth at 304.

Oregon will tee off its second round today at 11:50 a.m. and will be paired with Georgia and Texas.

Brian Smith is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.



Thomas James Hurst Seattle Times

Jerry Sokoloski is slightly smaller than the NBA's Yao Ming, but is virtually unknown to the professional league.

NBA Draft may pass through Mercer Island's 7-5 big man

Jerry Sokoloski has received little attention from the NBA despite his 7 foot 5 frame

By Les Carpenter
 The Seattle Times (KRT)

MERCER ISLAND, Wash. — In the murkiness of a half-dark gymnasium, Rob Potashnick works the zoom of his hand-held home video camera, trying not to shake, not to do anything to make this spectacle standing before him disappear. Through the viewfinder looms a man-child, a basketball player of gargantuan proportions.

Bigger than Shaq.

Bigger than Arvydas Sabonis.

Nearly as tall as Yao Ming.

And this player is holding his arms out from the side of his head, pinching a basketball between the thumb and forefinger of each palm. He giggles and waggles his hands, still clutching the balls. Want him to use different fingers? he asks. Jerry

Sokoloski is 7 feet 5, 311 pounds and wears a size-22 shoe. And here is the best part: Almost nobody in basketball knows he exists.

"So you think this is what the NBA scouts want to see?" Potashnick asks from behind the camera.

Potashnick is a real-estate agent and an eighth-grade basketball coach. He knows nothing about NBA prospects other than the most intriguing player in this year's draft has just walked into his life. And that the best thing to do when you have the basketball equivalent of Sasquatch in your garage is to make a videotape, because everyone will want proof.

"Go do that thing you can do with the rim and the basketballs," shouts former NBA center Blair Rasmussen, whom Potashnick has brought in to watch.

Sokoloski smiles sheepishly and walks to the basket, reaches up, and while standing on his toes, he pulls down the rim with one hand and shoves a ball through with the other. Rasmussen howls. Sokoloski

laughs. The camera rolls and who knows what to make of all this?

"You're a freak!" shouts Rasmussen, who stands 7 feet himself. "A freak of nature!"

On Thursday, Jerry Sokoloski turned 21. But it has not been an easy 21 years. He grew up a giant around the Toronto suburb of Brampton, Ontario, taunted by the other children, ogled by adults. He was 7 feet tall in the eighth grade and his full 7-5 by his second year of high school. His father was a truck driver, his mother lived in subsidized housing, and because of this they were apart for much of his childhood, leaving him tall, poor and vulnerable.

By his 21st birthday, he will have weighed 500 pounds, lost 200, put 100 back on, lost it again, nearly died from a liver ailment, been to three high schools, fallen in love, fallen out of love and cared for an ailing father when no one else could.

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