

SPORTS BRIEF

Granato due back with Colorado

DENVER — Colorado Avalanche general manager Pierre Lacroix dismissed Thursday any speculation that he would replace coach Tony Granato after the team's second-round playoff loss to the San Jose Sharks.

"It's never been discussed, intended, thought of," Lacroix said. "It's only rumors. I don't know why people are talking about it. It's clear there was no discussion, never internally, externally or ever."

Granato, who was promoted to head coach when Bob Hartley was fired Dec. 18, 2002, has been the coach during second- and first-round playoff exits the last two years. His playoff record is 9-9.

But he won 32 of 51 games during the 2002-03 regular season and led the Avalanche to a 100-point season in 2003-04 despite the team losing 417 man-games to injury, including large chunks of time missed by star forwards Paul Kariya and Peter Forsberg.

"He's got the best record in franchise history as head coach," Lacroix said.

On other issues related to the club, Lacroix said it would be "business as usual" this summer despite the potential for a lockout next season.

That includes working on contracts and dealing with free agents, even though a new collective-bargaining agreement might include a salary cap.

The Avalanche has eight players under contract for next season, including defensemen Rob Blake and Adam Foote and center Joe Sakic.

Colorado's restricted free agents include goaltender David Aebischer, left wing Alex Tanguay and right wing Milan Hejduk, who are all likely to be retained.

When asked about the team's six unrestricted free agents — Kariya, right wing Teemu Selanne, left wing Steve Konowalchuk, right wing Matthew Barnaby, defenseman Bob Boughner and center Andrei Nikolishin — Lacroix said the team hadn't yet made its evaluations.

Backup goaltender Tommy Salo will become an unrestricted free agent if the Avalanche, as expected, does not pick up his option.

"Our fans can be assured that we'll do what we have to do to keep an exciting hockey franchise like we've had," Lacroix said. "For 10 years we've offered the best, most exciting product in the league, so our goal is the same next year."

— Dan Wolken
The Gazette (KRT)



Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Senior Abby Andrus is Oregon's only competitor in the women's heptathlon at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships.

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especially running-wise," Skipper said. "But I can't worry about it. I have to go out and do my best."

Andrus leads UO women

On the women's side, in the heptathlon, the only Oregon competitor at the Pac-10 Championships will be redshirt senior Abby Andrus.

Andrus, a Peoria, Ariz. native, said she is excited about the two-day competition that begins Friday.

"Right now, physically I feel great and prepared and technically sound," Andrus said.

She competed in the heptathlon at the Oregon Invitational meet two weekends ago, where she finished in fourth place with 5,060 points. The score ranks her seventh regionally and places her 31st nationally this season. It is also the fourth-best conference mark of the season behind California's Brooke Meredith at 5,511 points.

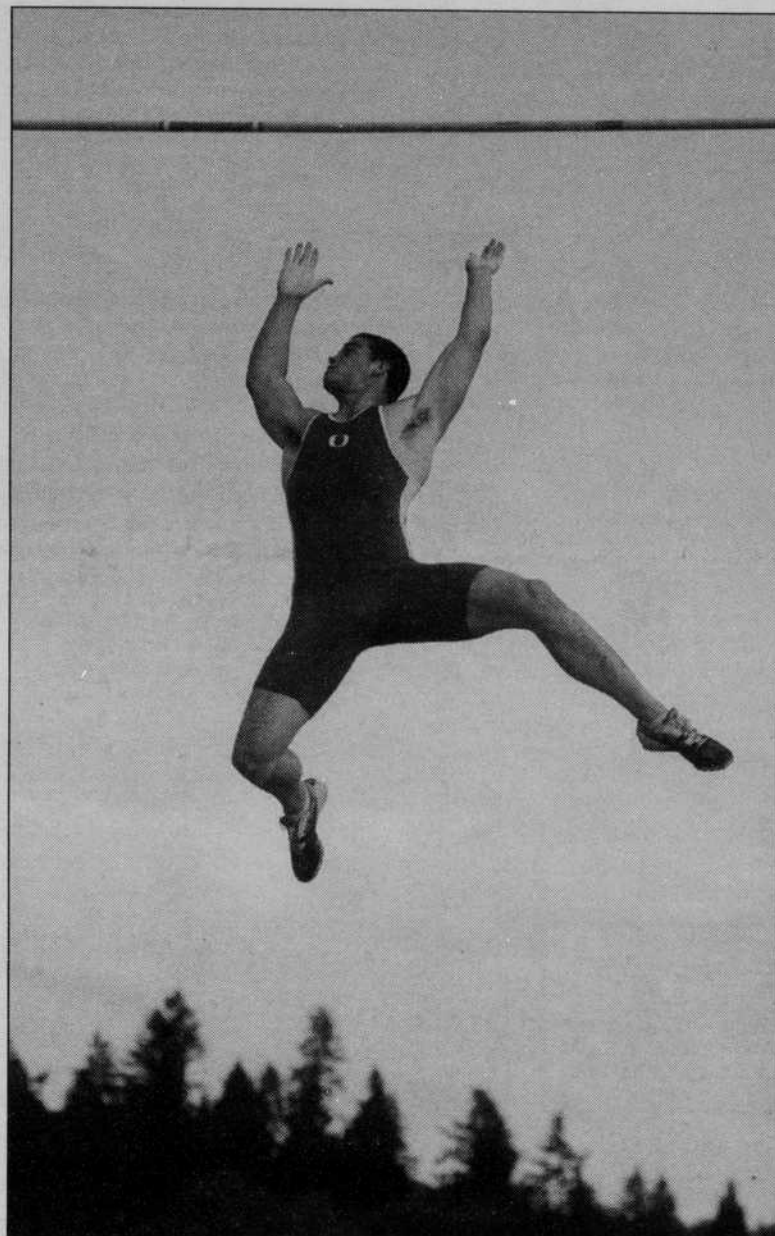
Andrus is also coming off a strong weekend at the Oregon Twilight after winning two events. She won the 100-hurdles in 14.16 seconds and the 400-hurdles in 59.9 seconds. Both times were season bests and Pac-10 qualifiers.

"My hurdles were really strong the last meet," Andrus said. "The hardest for me is staying mentally prepared and not getting too excited."

Andrus added that she hopes her successful performance from the Oregon Twilight can carry over into the conference championships.

"I'm happy," Andrus said. "It was a solid effort and it gave me confidence heading into this weekend."

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Lauren Wimer Senior Photographer

Tommy Skipper was a late addition to the decathlon in an effort to help Oregon score points for the team competition. He has not competed in the decathlon this season.

'CAT CALLS

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"I'm sure they're going to be very focused on getting back on track."

Most Pac-10 schools have a losing record at Hillenbrand, as the Wildcats routinely lose a single-digit number of games each season.

"Arizona is probably one of the toughest places to play," second baseman Erin Goodell said. "Not just because they're one of the best teams, but they have good fans and it's just a really tough place to play. It would be amazing to beat them there."

Arendsen is a career 2-4 against Arizona, 1-4 while at Oregon.

Saturday and Sunday, the Ducks face unranked Arizona State (31-27, 1-13) at 7 p.m. and 1 p.m., respectively. Oregon beat the Sun Devils 1-0 when Arizona State came to Howe.

Arizona State's sole conference win is against Oregon State.

"We have an opportunity to take a series from both

of those teams," pitcher Ani Nyhus said. "I think after playing Arizona, we see that there's no team in the conference that can't be beat."

The Ducks are coming off a two-game sweep, 1-0 and 3-0, of Portland State in a doubleheader Wednesday at Howe Field. Sophomore Amy Harris pitched 6

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Jenn Poore
Oregon catcher

1/3 scoreless innings in the first game to pick up the win. Nyhus earned her second save of the season when she came in relief.

Oregon's sole run in the first game came on a home run by left fielder Dani Baird.

Senior pitcher Anissa Meashintubby threw a complete-game shutout in the second game of the doubleheader. She gave up three hits and struck out seven Vikings.

In the bottom of the third inning of the second game, Oregon scored a run on an error by Portland State's catcher.

The Ducks added two more runs in the bottom of the sixth. Third baseman Ashley Richards scored on a double by catcher Jenn Poore. Poore advanced to third on the throw home before scoring on a single by Goodell.

"I think we know what we need to do," Poore said. "I think we realize that our intensity and our energies have a lot to do with our winning. We need to get everybody pumped up."

Oregon closed its homestand with a 5-3 record after going 2-1 against Arizona State and Arizona then going 1-2 against UCLA and Washington.

"I'm looking for a very hostile environment at Arizona," Arendsen said.

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