

SPORTS

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Best bet
NBA Playoffs:
L.A. Lakers vs. San Antonio
5 p.m., ABC

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Kent, Ducks land nation's seventh-best recruit

A Web site selects Malik Hairston as the second best shooting guard in the nation

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

The lure of more potential playing time apparently weighed heavily on the mind of Detroit's Malik Hairston.

The 6-foot-6 shooting guard orally committed to Oregon on Wednesday, becoming the fifth player in head coach Ernie Kent's heralded 2004 recruiting class.

And he's one heck of a recruit.

Http://www.rivals.com ranks Hairston as the seventh best player in the nation and the No. 2 shooting guard. He was named to the 2004 Parade and McDonald's All-America teams after averaging 20 points, 11 rebounds, six assists and five blocks per game as a senior at Renaissance High School.

He is such a talent that he has been compared to North Carolina State junior Julius Hodge, the 2004 Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year.

"Malik is a terrific all-around player," recruiting analyst Dave Telep told

CBS SportsLine.com's Gregg Doyel in mid-April. "That's his gift, that he can do a lot of things. If you're looking for (former Syracuse freshman) Carmelo

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Anthony, a guy who's going to come in and score 25 a night, I'm not sure he'll be that for a while. But he's the kind of guy people rally around. He's just a great glue guy."

At one point, Hairston had six schools on his potential list, including

the Pacific-10 Conference's UCLA. But in recent weeks, he had pared down the list, eventually saying on Tuesday that the Ducks and Kansas were his finalists.

Factors in his decision, according to various reports, were the amount of playing time he would receive during the 2004-05 season, the school's proximity to Detroit and whether or not the program he selected would have a realistic chance at winning a national championship in upcoming years.

"It was tough," Hairston told the Lawrence Journal-World. "It's a great situation at Kansas. You have to look at

the whole picture to see what was best in the long run. Kansas is a great program. They have a great coach in Bill Self. They'll have a lot of success regardless of the recruits. I wish them the best of luck."

Oregon has yet to receive Hairston's National Letter of Intent, making his announcement on Wednesday not binding. However, an Oregon spokesperson said the Ducks expect to announce an official signing sometime today.

With Oregon, Hairston has the op-

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Young veteran

Breanne Sabol has solidified herself as the Ducks' shortstop after a rocky recruiting experience

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

Breanne Sabol wasn't sure what to expect when she finally packed her bags to move to Eugene in the summer of 2002 to play softball for the Ducks.

When Sabol was originally recruited to play at Oregon, Rick Gamez was the head coach. Shortly after she signed her letter of intent with the Ducks, Gamez resigned amid a scandal, leaving first-year assistant coach Brent Rincon — hired two months previously — in charge of the program. It also left Sabol wondering if she still had her scholarship.

As the year went on, Sabol was reassured that she had her scholarship, and as she started to get ready to move to Eugene in July 2002, Oregon announced that Kathy Arendsen would take over as head coach of the softball program.

"I knew nothing about Coach A or (Assistant) Coach (Mike) White or (Assistant) Coach

J (Gaudreau)." Sabol said. "It wasn't scary, but I hadn't seen them until I actually came up here my first day that I had to report. It was a little nerve-racking because I hadn't met them and I wasn't playing summer ball where they could go watch me play."

"It was scary at first (when Gamez left), but then everything worked out."

And it did work out in the end. After the expected adjustment period for players and the new coaches passed, Sabol stepped right into the shortstop role and relinquished it just once during her freshman season, starting 55 of Oregon's 56 games in 2003.

"I figured she was going to have a pretty big role (when I saw her in her first practices)," Arendsen said. "She's a gifted player. I had trouble understanding her. I didn't read her very well and it was not the easiest transition. I think we've all grown since then."

Sabol has grown into the Ducks' starting shortstop for her second season as well, providing the Ducks with a strong arm and a quick reaction time that is key for a middle infielder.

The Southern California native's strength is her defense. Sabol has a range that amazes some opponents, racing to the other side of second base to routinely field balls for an out at first.

"Defensively, she's consistent," Arendsen said. "She's pretty brilliant with great range. She gets to balls that many players can't get to."

Sabol, who committed 22 errors during the season as a freshman, has cut that number to 12 so far this season for a .943 fielding percentage. She is part of the Ducks' league-leading 29 double plays.

The sophomore spent time during the off-season

working on her hitting, something she struggled with during her freshman season. After hitting .179 last year, Sabol has improved by almost 100 points to bat .270 through Sunday, three points above the team's average.

"I think she's really starting to focus on softball after this last season," Arendsen said. "I think she is starting to understand how talented she is and there's a price you pay when you're blessed with this much talent of commitment and dedication and I think that's all really starting to click in for her. I think she's just going to get better and better."

Sabol is not the first in her family to showcase her athletic ability at Oregon. Her older brother Garrett Sabol played football for the Ducks from 1997 to 2000. He married former Duck volleyball player Amy Banducci.

Breanne Sabol had been on trips to Eugene since she was in middle school, when her family would come up for football games. She liked the weather — "I came in the fall, so it was never raining" — and the atmosphere and the distance, saying, "It was far enough but not too far." Staying with her brother when she came for her recruiting visit helped Sabol decide on Oregon.

Now she's making it her home. She has reigned over the shortstop role for two seasons and is most known for one thing within the team.

Sabol, a Britney Spears fan, said her at-bat song is Spears' "Toxic," her bat is named "Britney" and teammates tease her about being a fan.

"Britney Spears is supposed to be a teenage-idol type of person and you're supposed to get

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Bruins search for Pac-10 title

UCLA looks to repeat for its eighth consecutive Pac-10 Championship

By Alex Tam
Sports Reporter

Eight schools seek to dethrone UCLA at the 18th annual women's Pacific-10 Conference Track and Field Championships in Tucson, Ariz., on Thursday. The Bruins are the early favorites heading into the event, along with a contingent of California schools, including Stanford and Southern California.

No. 1 UCLA

The Bruins hold the Pac-10's top marks in 11 events this season. Sophomore Chelsea Johnson set a new conference women's pole vault record at 15 feet, breaking the old mark of 14.8 by Oregon's Becky Holliday set in 2003.

Junior Monique Henderson has scored the league's best times in the 200 meters (22.71 seconds) and 400 meters (51.20).

No. 10 Stanford

The Cardinal will depend on youth and strength to score well in the distance events.

Second-year Alicia Craig leads the pack after setting a new collegiate record in the 10,000 meters (32:19.17) and also holds the conference's top time in the 5,000 meters at 15:31.15.

No. 14 USC

The sprint events are the strengths of the Trojans, headed by freshman Virginia Powell in the 100 meters (11.39 seconds) and first-year Dominique Dorsey in the 200 meters (23.70 seconds).

Junior Inga Stasiulionyte, the 2001 NCAA Javelin Champion and two-time runner up, is the defending Pac-10 Champion in the event in which she threw 182-4 inches last season.

No. 21 California

This season is a historic year for the Golden Bears. Five school records have been broken so far.

Sophomore Antonette Carter leads the squad in the 100 meters (11.53 seconds) and 200 meters (23.59 seconds).

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UO women are 'excited' about chance at Aggies

The Oregon women's Club lacrosse team, ranked No. 12, will face off against No. 5 Texas A&M today in St. Louis

By Kirsten McEwen
Freelance Reporter

The Oregon women's Club lacrosse team has heard all about nationally ranked teams. But today at the US Lacrosse Women's Division Intercollegiate Associates National Championships, the Ducks (16-4 overall, 8-1 Northwest Region) will finally see what the hype is all about.

Oregon, 12th in the nation, will play No. 5 Texas A&M at 9 a.m. in St. Louis at the Anheuser-Busch Sports Center. The tournament starts today and will run through Saturday.

Nineteen women are representing the Ducks in their first National Championship appearance. Oregon also represents the newest region to join the tournament — the Northwest — and will serve as the first team from the region to compete at Nationals.

"I think we are most excited about playing teams from different regions and skill levels," co-Co-ordinator Marissa White said. "We haven't seen any teams from the East Coast, so that should be a great learning experience."

The Ducks began their trek to the National Championships at Linfield College on April 17 and 18 during Regional Tournament action. Oregon began the tournament ranked third in its region,

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