

# Oregon women will face Lobos in CAA first round

The women will start their postseason in Seattle, while the men fly south to tackle Vanderbilt

By Clayton Jones  
Freelance Reporter

A season's worth of hard-fought victories, nail-biting defeats, tough injuries and inclement weather will come to realization as both the Oregon men's and women's tennis teams compete in first-round action of the NCAA Tournament on Saturday.

It's the first time since the 1999-2000 season that both the men and the women will compete in the tournament in the same season.

The women will not have to travel far; they will face New Mexico in their first round matchup in Seattle.

Head coach Nils Schyllander said his team has been making the

## DUCK TENNIS

most of the time off before the tournament.

"We're

resting, but were also concentrating on a lot of fitness," Schyllander said.

The 32nd-ranked Ducks should face a challenge against the No. 31 Lobos. New Mexico has dominated doubles play so far this season, compiling a 90-17 record. The Lobos' doubles play is led by the No. 8 duo of Mountain West Conference Player of the Year sophomore Maja Kovacek and senior Sandy Lukowski. That pair is 30-7 this season.

Oregon will counter with a balanced attack at the singles and doubles positions. The Ducks have compiled an above .500 record at all six singles positions and three doubles positions. They will be led by the one-two punch of No. 12 Daria Panova and No. 71 Dominika Dieskova. The two have combined for 52 victories this season, the most by any combo in Oregon history.

Panova says that, as a team, the Ducks have a good chance of advancing and possibly facing rival Washington.

"I think we're on the right track," Panova said. "We just need to make sure everybody shows up on the same day."

### Men face NCAA runner-up

The Oregon men's tennis team will travel to Oxford, Miss., for its first-round NCAA Tournament match against a Vanderbilt team that lost in the NCAA Championship match last year.

Head coach Chris Russell knows many people don't see his team getting past the No. 22 Commodores.

"On paper, we're the underdog," Russell said. "They have a good team with experience."

The Ducks believe this isn't only Oregon versus Vanderbilt; but rather, a matchup of the Pacific-10 Conference against the Southeastern Conference.

"Both teams feel they come from the best tennis conference in the country," Russell said. "We're going into the middle of SEC country and playing in an SEC

environment. Hopefully we can prove that the Pac-10 is the best."

Oregon's Markus Schiller, a transfer from Auburn — a fellow SEC school — knows from first-hand experience what the environment is going to be like.

"It's crazy, very hostile and they don't respect the other players at all," Schiller said.

Weather and humidity differences could also challenge the Ducks, but team members have been practicing in sweats to simulate the Mississippi heat.

"It's supposed to be cooling off, so hopefully that won't be too much of a factor," Russell said.

Oregon hopes to counter the hostile environment with their tough singles play. The Ducks will be led into battle with what is now being called the "Swiss Army." The group includes Swiss natives Sven Swinnen, Manuel Kost and 6-foot-6-inch Thomas Bieri. Swinnen is ranked 16th in the nation and Kost is 66th.

Both Swinnen and Kost have knocked off top-10 opponents this year and Bieri looks to be on the brink of coming into his own.

Russell believes the key for his team is coming out strong and combating the SEC environment.

"Everybody in the SEC comes out with fire and are fearless," Russell said. "If we can match that fearlessness and be willing to take this match from Vandy, we will have a good chance."

Clayton Jones is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

## SPORTS BRIEF

### Hairston officially a Duck

Oregon officially announced Malik Hairston's signing of a National Letter of Intent on Thursday, just one day after the Detroit native said in a press conference that he was bound for Eugene.

"This concludes a remarkable recruiting class for Oregon," said head coach Ernie Kent, who is in Kansas City, Mo., attending meetings for the National Association of Basketball Coaches' board of directors. "Malik is one of the top 10 players in the country."

Hairston, a 2004 All-American, averaged 20 points and 11 rebounds per game for Renaissance High School during his senior season. As a junior, he averaged 22 points and 12 rebounds per game while getting six assists per contest.

The 6-foot-6-inch wing averaged 18.7 points, 12.4 rebounds, six assists and 2.7 steals per game in his career

at Renaissance.

Hairston, whose father, Richard, played for Morris Brown College in Atlanta, is also a member of the USA Basketball Men's Junior National Select Team and participated in the 2003 USA Basketball Developmental Festival.

"It was the overall picture," Malik Hairston told The Detroit News of his decision to head west. "There are a lot of connections. Plus, it's the coach. I should have said that first. He's the one I'm going to play for. It's his temperament that suits me. They play a transition game, and transition is suited to my style of playing."

"All I can tell people is to watch Oregon next year. I don't have any worries about playing away from home. It's going to turn out well. I'm confident my decision was the right one."

Hairston joins fellow signees Maarty Leunen, Chamberlain Oguchi, Bryce Taylor and Kenny Love to form a five-man recruiting class.

— Hank Hager

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weekend's decathlon, however, Oregon is poised to defend its crown.

Holliday enters the meet with the Pac-10's top time in the 400-meter hurdles (51.08 seconds). Another important point-scoring hurdler will be sophomore Eric Mitchum, who owns the top time in the 110 hurdles (13.50).

In the field, junior transfer Leonidas Watson will be an important factor for Oregon in two events. He sits second in the triple jump and third in the long jump.

Freshman Tommy Skipper enters as

the favorite in the pole vault. The Sandy native helped give the Ducks an early points lead by winning the Pac-10 decathlon championship.

Holliday (2002, 400 hurdles) and senior javelin thrower Adam Jenkins (2003) are the only other Ducks who have won an individual Pac-10 championship.

Other teams expected to be in the hunt for a title are Southern California, Stanford and Arizona State.

"The pre-meet charts have UCLA as the favorite, with us close," Oregon head coach Martin Smith said. "But I'm not about to count any team out."

Contact the sports reporter at [jonroetman@dailyemerald.com](mailto:jonroetman@dailyemerald.com).

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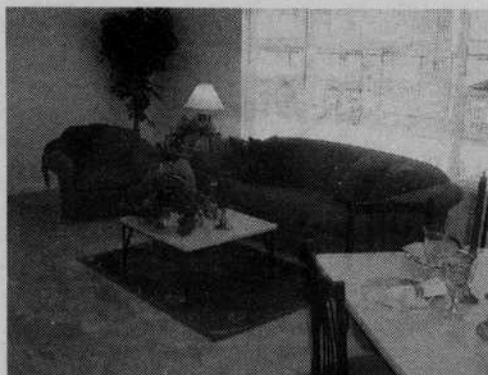
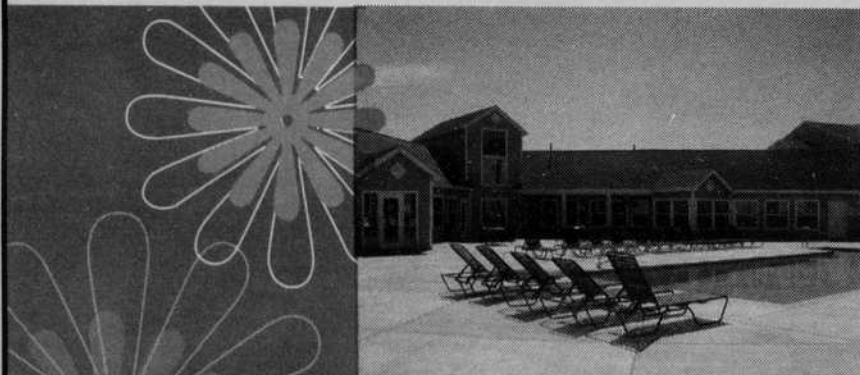
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