

SPORTS

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Best bet
NHL Playoffs:
Calgary vs. San Jose
7 p.m., ESPN

Monday, May 17, 2004

Oregon earns No. 2 seed for NCAA Regionals



Tim Kupsick Photographer

Oregon's Beth Boskovich (left), Ani Nyhus (left center) and Heather Munson (right) await the NCAA Regionals announcement Sunday at the Casanova Center. The Ducks face Bethune-Cookman at 9:30 a.m. Thursday. Oregon will travel to the Tallahassee, Fla., regional.

The Ducks will play at Florida State in an eight-team regional tournament that includes four teams from Florida; UO opens against Bethune-Cookman

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

The No. 12 Oregon softball team has a date with No. 7-seeded Bethune-Cookman in Tallahassee, Fla., at 9:30 a.m. Thursday.

The Ducks (38-19 overall, 10-11 Pacific-10 Conference) received the No. 2 seed in the regional hosted by No. 4-ranked and No. 1-seeded Florida State when the NCAA Softball Regional Tournament brackets were announced Sunday.

"We're a two seed and that's a great accomplishment for this group," Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "This is a very quality region; I think it matches well for us."

A crowd of family and friends gathered with the players and coaches in the Pittman Room at the Casanova Center for the selection show, broadcast on ESPN-NEWS. It was a smaller crowd than the one that gathered in the same location last season and the tension and subsequent rush of excitement that followed last season's selection show were missing Sunday.

"The biggest difference is that it wasn't a surprise," Arendsen said. "Last year, we truly were hoping that our names might show up there. This year, we knew. We felt very confident that we were going. It was a matter of where and who our opponents would be."

The "where" was answered with the fourth region announcement. During the first and second regionals — Arizona and UCLA — the Ducks knew they could not play at another Pac-10 school. The third regional, at host school Baylor, was an option, but when no Pac-10 school was announced, Oregon's coaches realized that Arizona State, the only Pac-10 program not ranked in the top 25,

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Ducks close out regular season with 1-2 weekend

Four Oregon seniors play their final games at Howe Field this weekend, beating Stanford and losing to Cal

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

Amid the emotions of Senior Day and the expectation of Sunday's announcement of Oregon's NCAA Regional Tournament destination, the No. 12 Ducks closed their regular season at home with a 1-2 weekend to stumble their way into an NCAA Regional No. 2 seed.

Oregon (38-19 overall, 10-11 Pacific-10 Conference) opened its weekend on a high

note Friday with a 1-0 win against No. 7 Stanford before dropping Saturday's doubleheader, 3-1 and 5-2, to No. 3 California at Howe Field. It is the 15th consecutive season that Oregon has failed to achieve a better-than-.500 conference record.

Friday's win was typical of a Pac-10 game — a pitchers' duel decided by few hits and fewer runs. In the second inning, both the Cardinal and the Ducks stranded two runners on base. Stanford saw just two more baserunners the entire game.

Oregon catcher Jenn Poore stopped the first sparks of a Cardinal rally in the fifth inning. After Stanford second baseman Meghan Sickler hit a double with two outs, Poore caught Sickler off

base and fired to Oregon shortstop Breanne Sabol to end the inning. First baseman Beth Boskovich helped out Poore in the sixth, backing her up on a foul popup. The ball bounced off Poore's glove and right into Boskovich's waiting mitt.

"Our defense was extraordinary, maybe the key to the game," Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "That's what we do best — we're a team. We played like that today and it showed."

The Ducks scored their only run in the bottom of the sixth inning. With two outs, center fielder Suzie Barnes dropped a single right in front of Stanford left fielder Jackie Rinehart. Barnes scored when Poore lined a double off the

right-field wall. It bounced back into shallow right field, past Stanford's outfielders.

Junior Ani Nyhus won the battle of the hurlers, giving up three hits and striking out four for her ninth shutout of the season.

"It feels a lot better than it did last weekend," Nyhus said. "We were excited to get one run across the board and my (team's) defense today was impeccable."

The win against Stanford gave the Ducks their third and final series win against a Pac-10 opponent. Oregon also won a series against No. 8 Washington and No. 18 Oregon State.

Saturday's losses to California dropped Oregon to 10-11 in Pac-10 play. Oregon was

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Oregon men take 2nd, women repeat 7th at Pac-10s

The Oregon men have a great meet but finish second to UCLA at the highly competitive Pac-10s

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

Oregon couldn't have asked for a better performance this past weekend at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships in Tucson, Ariz.

MEN'S TRACK

However, UCLA was just a little better.

The Bruins, the favorites entering the meet, used strong second-day performances in the 800 and 1,500 meters to overtake the Ducks and claim the conference crown. UCLA finished with 143 points, 13 ahead of Oregon (second, 130).

The Ducks entered Saturday's action with a 67-49 lead on the Bruins but lacked depth in several key

events down the stretch. Despite UCLA's efforts, Oregon's second-place finish marked the third consecutive top-two Pac-10 finish for the Ducks under head coach Martin Smith.

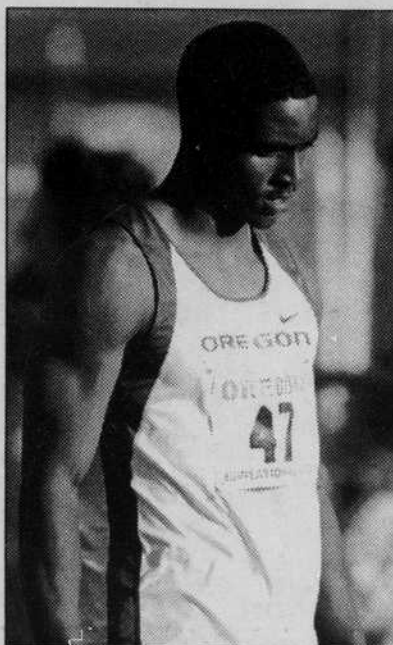
"I thought the men competed hard and dug down deep time and time again and did not back down," Smith said. "We came as close to our projected score as you could. UCLA simply responded with an amazing team effort of their own, and they deserve credit for that."

Arizona State finished third (120), followed by Southern California (95) and Arizona (93).

Sophomore Eric Mitchum and freshman Tommy Skipper earned individual Pac-10 titles in the 110-meter hurdles and the pole vault, respectively.

Mitchum defended his top seed by running his second-fastest wind-legal time ever (13.62 seconds), edging UCLA's Anthony Golston (second, 13.79) on Saturday. The Calumet City, Ill., native's top wind-legal

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Danielle Hickey Photo Editor

Eric Mitchum, seen earlier this year, captured one of two individual Pac-10 titles for Oregon this weekend in Tucson, Ariz.

Kirsten Larwin earns her best height in Pac-10 competition at 13-6 1/4

By Alex Tam
Sports Reporter

Individual achievements highlighted the Oregon women's effort Saturday at the Pacific-10 Conference Track and Field Championships in Tucson, Ariz.

Although seven women set new personal bests, the Ducks finished in seventh place — the same finish as the

2003 campaign — with 58 points in the nine-team competition. UCLA won its eighth consecutive conference championship with 174 1/2 points.

Oregon head coach Martin Smith said he was proud of his team's performance during a rebuilding period.

"I thought our women had an outstanding meet," Smith said.

"Individually they all strived to maximize their potential and should be commended for doing the same thing all season."

The best showing for the women came in the pole vault. Senior Kirsten Larwin took fourth place with a new personal best after clearing the bar at 13 feet, 6 1/4 inches on her third and final attempt. It was her best career showing at the Pac-10 Championships.

Larwin credited the sunny 96-degree weather at Roy P. Drachman Stadium for one of the best efforts in her four-year career at Oregon.

"What a way to go out," Larwin said. "I got some key third attempts at the last two heights. It was a little nerve-racking, but I also knew that it was certainly doable and I just went after it."

Fellow pole vaulter Emily Enders finished right behind Larwin in fifth place and also broke her personal best by four inches at 13-2 1/4. Enders surpassed expectations as she had entered the event seeded 12th with a prior best of 12-10 1/4, set at

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