





Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Ernie Kent (left), seen here at Oregon's NIT game against George Mason, met with the media Monday to talk about his 2004 recruiting class and defend the use of a private plane to help top 10 recruit Malik Hairston get to Eugene.

PLANE

continued from page 7

Would Hairston choose Oregon or Kansas, the two schools he had narrowed down from six suitors just days before?

At one point, Kent heard the rumors. But he had to know for sure.

Suffice to say, Kent got the answer he was looking for, even though it wasn't official until Thursday. Hairston will be a Duck, starting in the 2004 season.

With that signing has come national recognition for the Ducks. But not all of that is positive.

Kent met with the media Monday for the first time since Hairston's announcement. He spoke highly of the recruiting class — Hairston joins guards Chamberlain Oguchi, Bryce Taylor and Kenny Love; and forward Maarty Leunen - as his main subject, but he also defended his recruitment of the 6-foot-6 guard from Detroit.

Hairston made his official visit to Oregon on April 24 during a 24-hour time frame before visiting Oklahoma. Because he had missed a scheduled commercial flight - along with his parents - Kent and Oregon got him a private plane.

That, according to Kent, was just the second time in seven years that he has used a private plane for a recruit. And it only became necessary because of Hairston's tightly packed travel schedule.

Hairston's parents subsequently did

not make the trip to Eugene, although his mother reportedly favored Oregon during the last month or so of the recruiting process.

The use of the plane has raised questions in the minds of some across the nation, including The Columbus Dispatch's Rob Oller, who wrote on Thursday: "Oregon has a relatively unknown coach in Ernie Kent, is a three-day drive from Detroit and has about as much

"The thing I am opposed about is anything that hinders educational opportunities. ... They're going to have to bring it all into perspective sooner or later."

> **Ernie Kent** Oregon head coach

chance of winning a national championship as does MIT.

"But ... Hairston is a teenager, and teens - and their parents - are easily influenced and impressed."

Oller compared Kent to Ohio State head coach Jim O'Brien, who he said is "one of the game's most honest coaches and best tacticians," but lost in the Hairston sweepstakes.

Some have also found it ironic that Kent, who is generally against the use of private planes, used one in Hairston's situation. ESPN.com's Andy Katz wrote the use of the plane suggested Hairston is "royalty." The plane, Katz said, took \$21,000 to operate out to Eugene and back to Detroit, a figure not disputed by

Kent said the private plane was the only way to get Hairston out to Eugene. Yet, he - and some other coaches are for possible NCAA legislation that would make it illegal to use private planes in recruiting, even though their use with Oregon's football team is widely known around the nation. Head football coach Mike Bellotti, Kent said, is up against a different dynamic.

"The thing I am opposed about is anything that hinders educational opportunities," he said. "They're going to have to bring it all into perspective sooner or later."

Hairston's signing might open up some recruiting inroads to the Detroit area for Kent and the Ducks. The Michigan area is generally recognized as one of the better communities in the nation for high school basketball.

Oh, and he's also learned a lot about recruiting a top 10 player. That, he hopes, might come into play again in the near future.

"There's a lot more mudslinging," he said. "You get attacked more. There's a lot of stuff coming our way. But we don't need to go there."

Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

Hot Nights. Cool Trips. Advisors with Piercings.

Why Grandpa doesn't book his Summer Trip with us.



Paris.....\$537 London.....\$528 Cancun.....\$466 Costa Rica.....\$366

Hostels & transfers:

FIJ 5 nights, 3 islands

\$304 CANCUN

5 night accomm. \$275

One stop. No hassles. We've got everything you need for your next trip.

877 1/2 East 13th St.

(541) 344.2263

STA TRAVEL

www.statravel.com

SERIES

continued from page 7

Matt Mensik's 140-pitch performance kept Oregon in the game and forced extra innings.

The Ducks scored a run in the ninth inning, but they failed to keep their 7-6 lead as the Wildcats hit a solo home run off Oregon relief pitcher Gavin Wahl-Stephens to tie the game again at seven. In the 12th inning, Wahl-Stephens hit a home nin to give the Duc and the win against one of the most high-profile teams in the country.

"It was one of the craziest games I have ever played in," catcher Jon Loomis said.

Only hours later, Oregon faced UC Santa Cruz (10-11 overall, 6-6 California Baseball Conference) and came away with a 19-1 win. The win gave Oregon a place in the championship game and pitted it against a team the Ducks battled in regular season play, Western Washington (22-9 overall, 15-3 Pacific Mountain Conference).

Thanks to the double elimination format of the tournament, Western Washington had to beat Oregon twice on Sunday to capture the tournament crown.

In Oregon's first game against Western Washington, the Ducks fell 7-6 in a close matchup. The Vikings' win set up a winner-take-all situation in the tournament's final game.

We kept saying we were never out of games even when we were behind," pitcher Jay Tlougan said. "We ncking each other up and you could tell we really wanted to win."

With solid pitching and an offense consistently productive in nearly every inning, the Ducks finally took home the championship trophy after a 21-14 win against their conference rival.

"I think we wanted it more," third baseman Travis Chock said. "We had guys playing a lot better than they normally do and this time we had something to really play for.'

Oregon will now join seven other

teams - Central Michigan, Colorado State, James Madison, North Carolina State, Penn State, Texas A&M and Wisconsin - in Bradenton to compete in the 2004 NCBA World Series at McKechnie Field from May 26-31. Eighth-ranked Oregon will play No. 1 Colorado State (23-0 overall, 15-0 Rocky Mountain Conference) on May 26 at 6:30 a.m. (9:30 EST).

"If I were to look back when we started in October, I would have never guessed we would right now," Loomis said. "Going to the World Series was almost an unattainable goal for us, and now we have earned a chance to compete.

Chock said Oregon will focus on getting healthy in the weeks ahead to prepare for their World Series debut.

"We have a lot of guys with sore arms," Chock said. "We played five games in two days and so sore arms are to be expected."

Kirsten McEwen is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.



Golf at its finest. College students \$22 for 18 holes \$12 for 9 holes