

UO finishes year in rebuilding mode

The youth movement led the way for the Ducks this year, and it is expected to continue producing in 2004-2005 when two prized recruits hit campus

By Brian Smith
Freelance Reporter

For the Oregon men's golf team, the 2003-2004 season was full of disappointing finishes, moments of brilliance and the promise of better things to come.

MEN'S GOLF

With only two seniors on the roster — the rest being redshirt freshmen and sophomores who had less than a year of tournament experience — it could have been said that this season was one for rebuilding.

"We were an extremely young team," Oregon head coach Steve Nosler said. "We didn't have the hard-core upperclassmen that we have had in the past."

And indeed, the Ducks struggled because of it. Oregon was never able to string together solid events in order to build any kind of momentum. Only once were they able to

record back-to-back top-10 finishes.

The season result was four top-10 finishes in 11 events, with the Ducks finishing in the top five twice — the Northwest Collegiate Classic, which included senior Jimmy White's school-record 63, in the fall and the Duck Invitational this spring — culminating in a seventh place finish at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships.

The Ducks were denied their fifth-straight NCAA West Regional bid, finishing the year with a focus on the future.

"To make something positive out of the negative, I hope it is a bittersweet incentive that they didn't make it," Nosler said. "I don't think that regionals would have helped us. I think that the experience they got will make them better players next year."

Much of the hype that followed the Ducks into the spring season was not necessarily about what would happen on the course, but who had been signed off of it. A Southern California duo, Derek Sipe and Joey Benedetti, will be expected to join the team and contribute immediately.

"I've seen them both play and they are both really good golfers," Nosler said. "They both have chance to come here and play right away."

Sipe, a senior at Esperanza High School in Anaheim, Calif., has 25 tournament wins on

the Southern California PGA Junior Tour, along with being the 2003 California boys state amateur tournament runner-up. He is ranked third among junior players in the state of California and No. 9 nationally according to the National Junior Golf Scoreboard.

"Derek has a very impressive résumé and understands how to win a tournament," Nosler said.

Benedetti, who competes against Sipe in the Sunset League, is a three-time all-league first team member and helped lead Huntington Beach Union High School to the 2003 CIF state championship by finishing fifth individually.

"Joey doesn't have quite the tournament experience, but I think that he has a chance to be just as good," Nosler said. "I'm really excited because I think the two of them together should provide a solid base for our team for the next several years."

Nosler — who attended the OSAA 4A State Boys Championship last week in Corvallis — said he wouldn't trade Sipe or Benedetti for any of the high school prospects in the field.

"All the guys here (at Oregon) will have to play well next year to be ahead of these two coming in," Nosler said.

Brian Smith is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

Cubs and Dodgers provide fun for a couple of longtime fans



Jon Roetman

Roughing the passer

From the moment that Major League Baseball released its 2004 schedule late last year, we knew it had to happen.

For my buddy Brandon and me, noticing that a series between the Cubs and Dodgers was scheduled for mid-May in Los Angeles signaled a golden opportunity for fun: I'm a lifelong Cubs fan, he's a die-hard Dodgers fan, and road trips are a blast.

The clincher, however, came months later, when we failed to do anything fun during spring break.

After sitting on our butts in Portland for most of the break, we decided a mid-week baseball road trip to Los Angeles was the only true redemption.

We ordered the tickets and made hotel reservations online and

targeted the early morning hours of May 12 for our departure.

Last Wednesday finally arrived and we hit the road at 12:30 a.m. While I was excited for the events to come, I was already upset because Chicago had dropped the opening game of the series Tuesday night, 7-3. While the Cubbies had two more shots at redemption, I had to listen to Brandon run his mouth during the entire 858-mile trip.

The drive was long, but we managed to survive with Mountain Dew, 7-11 hot dogs and a heated baseball trivia battle.

After 12 hours, the sky turned foggy with pollution, the air started to stink and fellow drivers abandoned the use of their turn signals. Hey, I guess we made it to Los Angeles in pretty good time.

After lunch and a short nap at a Ramada Inn, we left for Dodger Stadium two hours prior to game time, despite being only 10 miles away. I've been a victim of rush hour traffic in Southern California before, and arriving to the game late — even though we would have blended in with most of the "arrive late, leave early" Los Angeles fans — was not an option.

Traffic turned out to be mild

and finding a place to park was fairly cheap and easy — I expected stadium parking to be a lot steeper than \$10.

As we walked to the stadium, the intensity picked up. Each sporting our respective team's apparel, Brandon and I weren't shy about reminding each other whose team was going to win. The night's pitching matchup: Matt Clement — who at the time sported a 5-1 record for the Cubs with one of the best sliders in baseball — against the Dodgers' Wilson Alvarez — a chubby, journeyman left-hander, whose fastball tops out at 88 mph.

The first 2 1/2 innings breezed by as both pitchers were dealing. The bottom of the third inning, however, turned out to be one of the most frustrating events I've ever been a part of.

The Dodgers scored two runs on five hits against Clement, with only one ball reaching the outfield. I was forced to sit back and listen to Los Angeles fans scream and shout — especially Brandon — while their Dodgers grabbed a two-run lead on a plethora of T-ball style infield rollers.

The game continued as a pitchers' duel until the bottom of the

seventh, when Dodger second baseman Alex Cora had one of the greatest at bats in MLB history. After working a two ball, one strike count, Cora fouled off 14 consecutive pitches before sending pitch no. 18 from Clement — a slider that didn't slide — into the Cubs bullpen in right field for a 4-0 lead.

Things got even worse moments later when a Cubs fan backed down from a fight with a Dodgers fan. Talk about a complete loss of pride.

The Cubs failed to pose a threat during the final two innings and lost 4-0.

Even though the Cubs avoided a sweep by winning the Thursday afternoon game, 7-3, the damage had been done.

Even though Chicago's superior pitching rotation and lineup will likely carry it much further than Los Angeles by season's end, I'll likely have to wait until the Cubs sweep the Dodgers during their next meeting in August before he'll shut up.

See ya at Wrigley Field, buddy.

Contact the sports reporter at jonroetman@dailymerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

TAM

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satisfying enough for them. Playing on the same court was an honor in itself.

In fact, back in 1992, it was customary that the opposing team would be seen taking photos with their American basketball idols' minutes before tip-off.

However, today, that fear of playing the United States in basketball has vanished. Some players are leaving the team in droves due to personal agendas.

New Jersey forward Kenyon Martin declined an invitation because he said he was more worried about signing a new contract this summer. Martin told the New York Daily News a week ago that getting a multimillion dollar deal is "the most important thing" to him right now.

Minnesota's Kevin Garnett and Los Angeles' Karl Malone and Shaquille O'Neal both have expressed disinterest as their teams are currently in the midst of the playoffs.

This comes two years after the United States was embarrassed at the World Championships, finishing in sixth place and losing three of their last four games.

NBA players vowed to return with their best representatives at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. They vowed to bring back the United States to prominence and back on top of the world.

And now, what happened?

Why are they leaving?

Did they get over what occurred two years ago and already forget the embarrassment that was felt afterward?

Sure, the threat of terrorism is a big issue at the moment, and many of the athletes are avoiding traveling overseas as long as they can help it. You cannot fault them for valuing their own safety.

Houston's Yao Ming of China, though, told The Associated Press that he believes his safety will not be an issue.

Back to basketball: You can't forget, though, that the level of competition has significantly been more equal year after year since 1992. An influx of foreigners are showcasing their skills and are quickly becoming noticed as not only the best of their country, but the best in the world.

Ming and Sacramento's Peja Stojakovic of Serbia-Montenegro are two examples of foreign players who are taking the NBA game by storm. They were two of the four foreigners who received votes for the league's Most Valuable Player award this year.

During the 2003-04 season, more than 45 foreigners earned a spot on NBA squads with that number expected to continue to grow. And only six of the league's 29 teams failed to have a non-American on their roster.

Nevertheless, if the best of the United States played against the best from any country, many would agree that the Americans would come out on top for the majority of the time.

It's just too bad many of them won't be competing.

Contact the sports reporter at alextam@dailymerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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