

SPORTS BRIEFS

Six Emeralds selected to Northwest All-Star game

Six Eugene Emeralds were chosen by a league-wide committee to participate in the first ever Northwest League All-Star Game on Aug. 3.

The game, which will be played in Spokane's Avista Stadium, commemorates the 50th anniversary for the Class A short-season league.

The six Emeralds selected were catcher Colt Morton, infielder Lachlan Dale, center fielder Matt Thayer and pitchers Vern Sterry, Mike Ekstrom and Brian Burks.

"This is a great opportunity for the Northwest League to showcase the excellent talent that has always been present in this league," Northwest League President Bob Richmond said. "We are excited to have this game in Spokane because of their tremendous fan support and excellent facility."

Spokane leads the league in attendance with an average of 4,353 people per game in 21 games for a total of 91,428 so far this season. Eugene is second in attendance, averaging 3,300 per game.

"We are extremely excited about the opportunity to host the Northwest League 50th Anniversary All-Star Game," Spokane Indians President Andrew Billig said. "This is a great honor for our franchise and for the Inland Northwest. It is also appropriate that Spokane should host this event, since Spokane was one of the original Northwest League cities when the league was founded in 1955."

The All-Star Game will also feature a Home Run Derby, in which the winner will receive a \$500 grand prize.

Through Sunday, Eugene has two hitters leading the league in home runs. Morton leads the league with 13 home runs and Dale is second with 11.

Thayer is 11th among the

league's top batting averages at .301 through Sunday.

Sterry is sixth among the league's starting pitchers in ERA at 3.40 in eight games. Ekstrom, a Gresham native, is 3-0 with a 2.96 ERA this season. Burks is the team leader in saves with four and is 1-2 with a 2.65 ERA.

Preseason poll picks Oregon football to finish third

Oregon is slated to finish third in the Pacific-10 Conference, according to the league's annual football preseason media poll.

USC was selected to win next year's Pac-10 Conference Championship with a total of 240 points and claimed all 24 first place votes. The California Golden Bears were second with 210 points and Oregon took third with 192.

This past season, USC captured its 10th national championship after the Trojans went 12-1 and won their last nine games. This is the second year in a row that the Trojans were picked in the media poll to win the conference title.

Oregon finished third in the 2003-04 season with an overall record of 8-5.

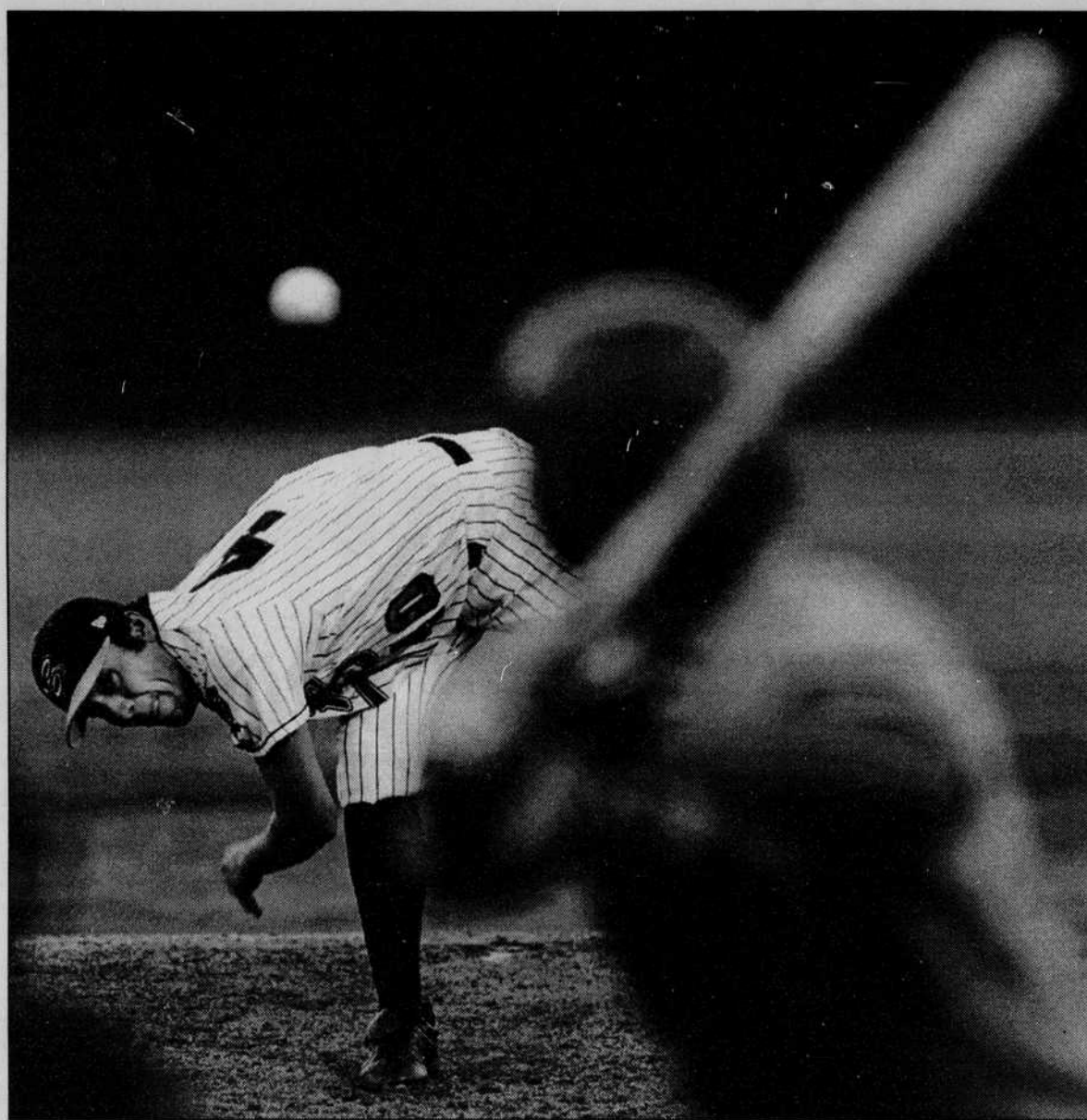
The Pac-10 media have correctly selected the past four Pac-10 champions, including Oregon in 2001.

They have also correctly picked five of the past six champions. In 1999, the media members wrongly predicted Arizona to win the conference title; Stanford won the Pac-10 crown that year after being predicted eighth.

The media poll picked Oregon State fourth (138 votes), then Washington State (133 votes), Arizona State (131 votes), Washington (100 votes), UCLA (98 votes), Stanford (40 votes) and Arizona (38 votes).

In the ESPN/USA Today Coaches Preseason Top 25 Poll released Saturday, Oregon slipped in at No. 25.

— Alex Tam



Jared Paben Editor in Chief

Eugene pitcher Danny De La O has struggled to find consistency coming out of the bullpen and as a starting pitcher. De La O is 2-3 with a 6.51 ERA in 37.1 innings pitched through Sunday. He has struck out 26 batters and walked 17 this season.

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provided an offensive spark with five hits, including two home runs in the victory. Kazmar also scored four runs and had three RBIs.

However, Kazmar said the last couple of weeks have been frustrating with his team's inconsistency on offense.

"It's all about timely hitting," Kazmar said. "If you go through all of the box scores the past two weeks, we're not out-hitting (our opponents). We're matching them with hits. It's all about timely hitting and we're not coming through in the clutch."

Through Sunday, the Emeralds have the league's worst batting average at .239 and are second to last in runs scored with 219. However, Eugene is second in the league in home runs with 43.

The inability to produce runs without relying on the home run has been a problem thus far and has made for a tough season, Kazmar said.

"It's definitely frustrating," said Kazmar, who is batting .284 with four home runs and 20 RBIs. "I mean, we're coming out here to win on a daily basis. It's been a tough season and tough schedule coming out here every day and trying to give 100 percent. That's all the coaches can ask for too."

Along with the problems on the

offensive side, defense and late-inning relief pitching has been a main issue of concern.

This past Thursday's 7-5 loss to Spokane was characteristic of how the season has gone so far for the Emeralds.

After loading up the bases in the first inning with just one out, Eugene could produce only one run to take a 1-0 lead.

In the fifth inning, the Emeralds scored four runs to lead 5-3, including a two-run home run by Matt Thayer — his second of the season.

However, Eugene's bullpen could not sustain the lead after starting pitcher Vern Sterry left after going five strong innings and giving up three runs.

Five Eugene relief pitchers later combined to give up four runs to surrender the lead for good in the eighth inning.

The Emeralds had a chance to tie the score in the bottom of the ninth inning with runners on first and third base with one out. But two strikeouts by Jose Lobaton and Colt Morton ended the game.

Eugene also had five errors in the contest, while three of seven runs given up were unearned.

"We had guys on base, but we didn't drive those runs in," Morton said after the game. "We had a lot of errors. It's unfortunate, but it was a tough game. Hopefully we can turn it around and come out stronger."

Through the first 45 games of the season, Morton said his team is still trying to figure out how to sustain consistency on offense, defense and pitching.

"We need clutch hitting and clutch pitching," said Morton, who has 13 home runs this season. "We got to come out and make things happen. If we do that, we can start winning more ball games."

Eugene continues action on Thursday when they travel to Everett to face the first-place Aqua Sox at 7:05 p.m. The Emeralds have an off day today and tomorrow because of the 50th Anniversary Northwest League All-Star Game in Spokane today.

NOTES

Eugene received pitcher Clayton Hamilton from Peoria of the Arizona League and outfielder Ernesto Garay from Fort Wayne of the Midwest League on Thursday. ... Outfielder Ruben Mora and pitcher Matthew Varner were promoted from Eugene to Fort Wayne. ... The Emeralds also sent pitcher Henry Colbert to Peoria. ... Eugene has a record of 0-22 when trailing after seven innings. ... When leading after seven innings, Eugene has a record of 12-3. ... The Emeralds were 11-19 in the month of July, going 6-11 at home and 5-8 on the road.

alexam@dailyemerald.com

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someone, maybe permanently, worth all of the squabbling to prove that one athlete is more "manly" than the other?

No.

The solution to this problem is basically this: Just go out and prove it on the field, on the court, on the track or whichever sports venue that you are competing in.

The very best athletes are made and remembered by their performances on the court or on the field — not off it.

Sunday's skirmish at the Junior Olympics was a disgrace and took the

much-deserved attention away from the more than 5,600 junior track and field athletes, who ranged from eight to 18 years of age, and worked extremely hard to reach this level.

Nearly 15 minutes after the brawl, the Junior Olympics continued on with the midget Girls 4x400 meter relay final. At that moment, spectators cheered loudly to watch what they had paid for — a track meet, not a fight.

The incident that occurred just minutes earlier should not have happened at the forefront of one of the nation's biggest track and field stages.

But, unfortunately, it did.

alexam@dailyemerald.com