

"I don't know what to expect right now, but we as players have to do what we've got to do to make sure that the pot is spread equally."

JIM JACKSON | Houston Rockets guard on a new collective bargaining agreement

■ In my opinion



CLAYTON JONES
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

Division shifts a plus, but Blazers will still lose

It's that special time when "candidates" have worked hard, and it's time to produce.

Who will finish on top?

Who knows? It'll be months before the results are found.

The National Basketball Association started play yesterday, and I'm pumped.

By the time anyone reads this, three games will have been played in this young NBA season.

There are a lot of new and fun aspects to the NBA this year, including division realignment.

For the league, this is a great idea. Divisional matchups will be more compelling and will make more sense geographically.

Portland Trail Blazer fans: Hold on, don't get too excited.

Portland now plays in the Northwest Division, which has arguably two of the top three teams in the conference, Denver and Minnesota.

Minnesota is one of the "sexy" choices (i.e. the Seattle Seahawks of the NFL) to win the title this year.

Why, you ask?

K.G. Enough said.

Kevin Garnett is the best all-around basketball player on the planet right now. He led his team to the best record in the league last year and nearly beat the Lakers in last season's Western Conference Finals.

But all you Portland fans thinking that the drama of the Lakers is finally out of your division, fear not; Minnesota has its own problems.

Both Sam Cassell and Latrell Sprewell are griping about contract extensions (Why? I don't know, because both are 34-years-old and past their primes) with Sprewell demanding a trade.

But once again, the Timberwolves have K.G.

In Denver, the Nuggets picked up one of the most coveted free-agents of the off-season in Kenyon Martin. The Nuggets are young, exciting and made the playoffs last year with rookie Carmelo Anthony leading the team in scoring. A damn rookie!

With Martin and Marcus Camby on the inside, Andre Miller and Voshon Lenard on the outside and Anthony covering everything in between, Denver will be tough.

An improved Utah team is also in the Blazers' division. One of the surprises of the league last season, Utah will now have added pressure to succeed. The Jazz picked up two big men during the off-season: Mehmet Okur and Carlos Arroyo (fresh off shocking Team USA in Greece) isn't out too long with his ankle injury.

Those two, teamed with Andrei Kirilenko, will give the Jazz a tough frontcourt to contend with. Their backcourt isn't too shabby either, as long as Carlos Arroyo (fresh off shocking Team USA in Greece) isn't out too long with his ankle injury.

Luckily for the Blazers, Seattle will join them in the division, and it looks like these two teams will be fighting to the death over last place.

The Sonics, as I'm sure every Oregon fan knows, have Luke Ridnour. This figures to be the year he gets more playing time, which could fit in well with Nate McMillan's run-and-gun offense.

He will be flanked by All-Stars Ray Allen and Rashard Lewis. These two combined for more

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■ Duck volleyball



ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon libero Katie O'Neil, seen here against Arizona, posted the third-best Pacific-10 Conference performance for total digs in a match with 43 in a losing effort to Washington State last week.

Huskies keep grip on No. 1 position

OSU forces Washington to drop two consecutive games, the first time since December 2003

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

In 41 of the last 45 weeks, a Pacific-10 Conference team has occupied the top spot in the USA Today/CSTV Top 25 poll. Washington has been at No. 1 for the last five weeks.

During a televised match last week, the Huskies (19-0 overall, 11-0 Pac-10) were forced into a five-game contest and were nearly upset by Oregon State. The Beavers (9-11, 3-8) won the first game 30-20 and then overthrew the Huskies again in the second, 39-37, marking the first time Washington has lost two consecutive games since Dec. 13 of last year, when they dropped games against Minnesota in the NCAA Regional Tournament.

Washington was still without senior Sanja Tomasevic — a 2003 second-team All-American — during last week's road trip but managed to stay undefeated.

A core of outside hitters picked up the slack and kept the Huskies two games ahead of their nearest Pac-10 foe. Brie Hagerty is averaging 4.81 kills per game through the last six matches, and she recorded 40 kills against the Oregon teams. The junior's season average in kills is 4.10, which is third in the conference.

Senior Kaitlin Leck recorded a team-high 27 kills against Oregon State and added 12 against Oregon.

Fellow outside hitter Christal Morrison continues to post substantial numbers for the Huskies and is second in the conference in kills per game, averaging 4.32. The true-freshman phenom is the team-leader with 268 kills.

With one more victory Washington will

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■ Duck golf

Oregon ties for 10th at The Prestige

The Ducks finish out their fall season with the team's best showing at the tourney since 2000

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
FREELANCE SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon men's golf team wrapped up its fall season tying for 10th at The Prestige at PGA West, played on the par-72, 7,156-yard Greg Norman course in La Quinta, Calif. For the Ducks, it was their best Prestige finish since 2000, when they finished ninth.

Freshman Joey Benedetti led the Ducks after shooting a final round 1-over 73 to finish in a tie for 10th. The Huntington Beach, Calif., native carded four birdies and five bogeys to mark his best performance as a collegiate athlete. Benedetti finished the tournament with an 11-over par 227 for the three rounds.

Eleventh-ranked UCLA topped the field with a final round 294, bringing its total score to 904.

This made for an impressive nine-stroke lead over second-place finisher and host UC Davis, who scored a 913, followed by UC Irvine and No. 24 Texas Tech, who tied for third at 917. Oklahoma took fifth at 922 and Stanford nabbed sixth with 924, followed by Kansas and No. 7 Texas Christian who tied for seventh at 925. Texas Christian came into The Prestige as 2003 defending champions. No. 13 Brigham Young finished ninth at 931.

Oregon saved its best round for last and carded a 308, but still fell two spots into a tie for 10th with Notre Dame at 934.

The individual title of The Prestige went to Erik Hill of UC Davis, who carded a tournament-best 69 on Tuesday. Hill finished with a 1-over 217 to edge out Cole Isban of Notre Dame by two strokes.

The Ducks' Kyle Johnson, who was competing in his first event of the season, tied for 33rd at 231. Chris Dukeminier tied for 53rd at 240.

Second round action of The Prestige saw the Ducks take their newly remodeled starting rotation into an eighth place finish. Johnson led Oregon after shooting a 9-over 153 Monday to tie for 13th with Michael Putnam of Pepperdine. Johnson started the round strong but struggled a bit toward the end of the front nine, carding a pair of double bogeys. Johnson did get one stroke back, however, with a birdie on the par-5 12th hole.

Benedetti had first and second rounds of 79 and 75, respectively, to tie for 15th at 10-over going into the third round. During the second round, Benedetti carded four birdies, five bogeys and a double bogey, making for a roller coaster of an afternoon for the freshman. Sophomore Matt Ma, making his varsity season debut

at the PGA West, shot 79-80-159 and was tied for 38th. Ma's name reverberated throughout the course after he fired a head-turning eagle on the par-4 11th hole in the second round.

UC Davis took the lead at the end of the second round after shooting a 303 to edge UCLA by one stroke. The Aggies finished the day at 609, followed by the Bruins at 610. UC Irvine completed the University of California sweep of the top three spots by taking third with 612, followed by Kansas at 618 and Texas Christian at 621. The Red Raiders of Texas Tech finished sixth with 622, followed by fellow Big XII Conference foe Oklahoma at 623.

Pepperdine trailed Oregon by one stroke to finish ninth with 627, followed by Stanford at 628, Brigham Young at 629 and Notre Dame at 633.

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