

"It will work out, somehow. That's a hell of a duo right there, Marbury, Crawford and Houston."

Denver Nuggets forward Carmelo Anthony on the New York Knicks

In my opinion



BRIAN SMITH
LEFTY SPECIALIST

Anything is possible in conference of equality

Maybe it's in the spirit of the new year. You know, new beginnings, new paths, etc. Somebody must have mentioned the idea of "new" to the Pacific-10 Conference, because a new order seems to be taking shape.

For the first time in a long time, the conference is truly up for grabs.

For both the men and the women.

Is that stretching it?

Yeah, probably.

But hey, anything is possible.

And if the Washington Huskies or the Oregon women's victories over No. 9 LSU and No. 10 Stanford last year is any indication of that, I don't know what is.

In addition, for the first time in a few years, no team or teams are powerful favorites to run away with the title. There are some contenders, e.g., Washington and Arizona for the men and perennial power Stanford for the women.

I think there is a real chance that each champion could have four or five losses in conference play.

So why can't the Ducks, men or women, make their way into the upper echelon of the conference?

I know it's early, but look at the way the Pac-10 stands right now.

On the men's side, conference doormat Washington State has a better record than last year's champion Stanford.

Speaking of Stanford, this could be the year when Oregon State could resemble Stanford of the past decade and the Cardinal could resemble Oregon State of, well, the...past...15...years.

Anything is possible.

The Southern California men's basketball team is an orphan looking for a parent/coach.

If Arizona State's Ike Diogu was getting any help from his team, the conference title might reside in Tempe, not Tucson.

A.I.P. (Anything is possible).

The Oregon men this year could be the Washington of last year. They have the athleticism. On any given night, they can make scoring 100 points look easy.

But be patient, with the youth that takes the floor every Thursday and Saturday, they will suffer fits of inconsistency.

As fans, we can't have a short leash on them. After all, they already have the distinction of being the best recruiting class Oregon has ever had.

They don't need anymore pressure.

Arizona could, for only the second time since Lute Olson took over as head coach, finish lower than third in the conference.

Hey, the Red Sox won the World Series. A.I.P.

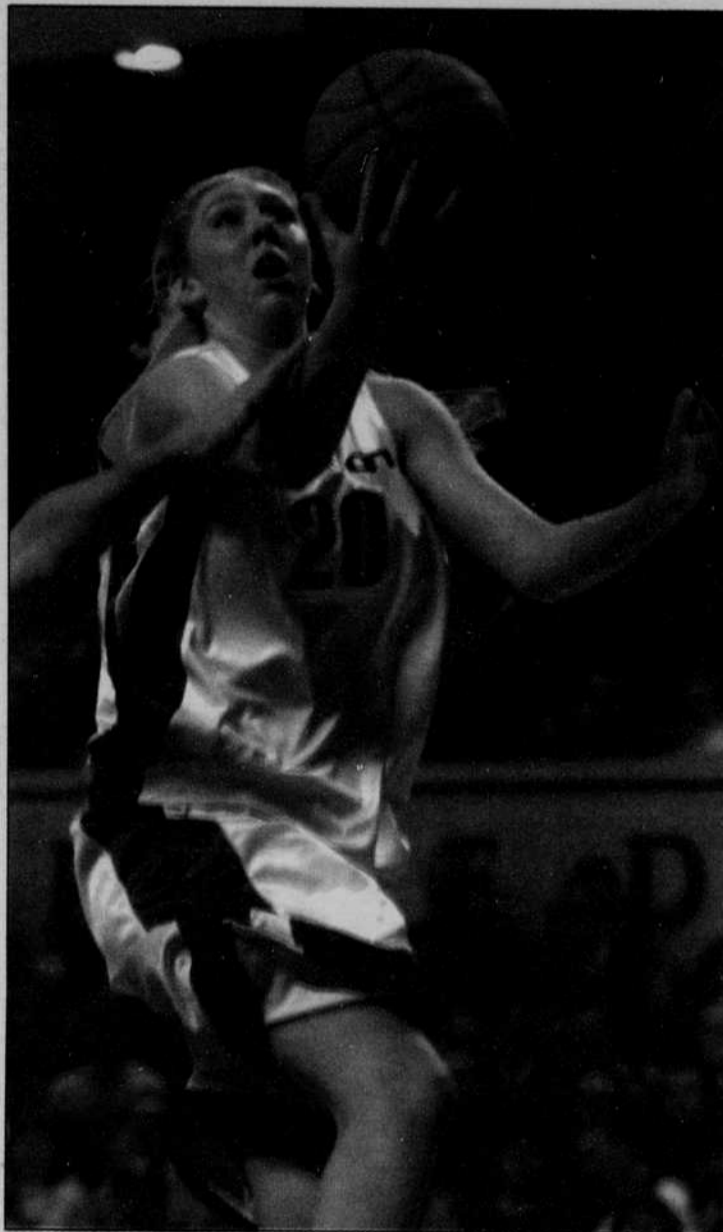
This could be the year where I-5 will take you through the top three teams in the men's conference and the Northwest will put more teams in the NCAA tournament than the Southwest and California combined.

As for the Duck women, a tournament berth down the road truly exists on the road. If they can win five conference games away

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Women's basketball

Women fight to reclaim road record



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Freshman forward Kristen Forristall has started the past four games for the Ducks.

Oregon hopes to get its first Pac-10 road win when it takes on Oregon State in Corvallis Saturday

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon women's basketball team is dealing with a two-game losing streak for the second time this season, and each defeat weakens the team's reputation and confidence in Pacific-10 Conference play.

In five road games this season, the Ducks (9-4 overall, 2-2 Pac-10) won their first two but are now 2-3. They committed 20 turnovers in each game of the Los Angeles road trip.

Oregon will attempt to get back on track and reclaim a .500 traveling record against Oregon State at Gill Coliseum Saturday at 2 p.m.

The Civil War history favors the Ducks, who are 20-14 all-time against the Beavers when playing in Corvallis and 50-22 overall. Oregon State (4-9, 0-4) has taken the last two meetings from Oregon on its home court.

"This is probably their best chance to get a (Pac-10) win," Oregon senior Cathrine Kraayeveld said. "It's the Civil War — they're going to be pumped up for the game and we have to be just as ready for it."

Oregon's Andrea Bills is two points away from 1,000 for her career. She is averaging 10.8 points per game and has scored 141 this season, but was limited to four points against UCLA. The 6-foot-3 center will be expected to be more productive in the paint against an Oregon State team that has no player taller than 6 feet 2 inches.

Freshman Kristen Forristall has started all four conference games for the Ducks at forward in place of sophomore Eleanor Haring. In that stretch, Forristall is averaging 21 minutes and 6.3 points per game.

The Beavers have started Pac-10 play with a four-game losing skid to the quartet of California schools. In that span, they have been outscored 214-295.

Senior guard Shannon Howell, who leads the team and is third in the conference in scoring with 17.8 points per game, has shot 18.9 percent from the field (10 of 53) and averaged 7.3 points over the past four games.

Howell was the nation's leading scorer through the first nine games of the season with 22.4 points per game.

Oregon will have to be vigilant on the defensive end with juniors Mandy Close and Kim Butler on the floor. Both players average a little over 10 points per game.

"They are smaller and quicker," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said, when comparing her team to Oregon State. "We've played a lot of teams like that this year, so I think we're ready to play that mentally and physically."

Close, a guard, suffered a concussion against UCLA and did not play against USC. With that absence, her streak of 74-consecutive appearances ended but she has been cleared to play Saturday.

Butler bounced back to her position at forward with 19 points

WOMEN'S, page 6A

Duck wrestling

Ducks prepare for annual Oregon Wrestling Classic

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

Many golden opportunities lay ahead for the Oregon wrestling team today as they travel to Deschutes County Fair and Expo Center in Redmond to host the Oregon Wrestling Classic. The Ducks have a chance to make a couple more marks in their "win" column as they compete against South Dakota State and Southern Oregon in dual format.

Oregon has begun to make headway in team competition following its strong performances in last week's duals against Fresno State and Cal State Bakersfield. Although the Ducks have had trouble winning as a team this season and sit at 0-3 in Pacific-10 Conference duals, they feature a cadre of talented wrestlers who have recorded numerous individual achievements.

Leading Oregon into competition is junior Shane Webster. Webster is ranked third in the nation according to InterMat and is undefeated this season through 15 matches. His last win came against Jason Carrasco of Cal State Bakersfield by way of a 22-7 technical fall on Sunday. Webster is second on the team with 19 team points. Scott Barker, ranked fifth in the nation, aims to add to his team-leading 20 wins at the 197-pound weight class.

South Dakota State enters the Oregon Classic fresh after being formally approved to reclassify to Division I status. The Jackrabbits are

2-0 in duals this season and last defeated Princeton 18-15 on Dec. 12. Fortunately for Oregon, South Dakota State will spot the Ducks 12 points in the match because they will be without wrestlers for the 133-pound and heavyweight divisions. These two forfeits should give Oregon enough support to save their standouts.

Southern Oregon hopes to gain further recognition this weekend and a win over Oregon is just what it needs to do so. The Raiders are ranked ninth in the nation by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. Southern Oregon takes pride in its 34 consecutive winning seasons.

Other teams competing in the tournament include Pac-10 foes Portland State and Oregon State as well as Pacific, Augsburg and Cal Poly. Pacific head coach Scott Miller feels the Oregon Classic yields great opportunities for all schools competing.

"Teams will definitely be tested this weekend," Miller said. "We're all excited to be competing against such quality competition."

At last season's Oregon Classic, the Ducks lost to both Cal State Fullerton and San Francisco State, and defeated Army. Oregon continues its season next Friday with a dual against Boise State at McArthur Court. The Broncos, ranked 21st nationally by Wrestling Mall, are 3-4 this season in dual matches.

IN BRIEF

Randy Johnson, Yankees agree to two-year contract extension

NEW YORK — Randy Johnson and the New York Yankees reached a preliminary agreement Thursday on a \$32 million, two-year contract extension.

The Big Unit waived his no-trade clause as part of the agreement, a baseball official and a person close to Johnson said on condition of anonymity.

Arizona and New York tentatively agreed last week to a trade that calls for the Diamondbacks to receive pitchers Javier Vazquez and Brad Halsey, catcher Dioner Navarro and \$9 million.

Only one step remains for the five-time Cy Young Award winner to join the Yankees: All players involved in the trade must pass physicals.

The Yankees, Diamondbacks and agents for the players were working Thursday on the logistics of arranging the medical exams.

Johnson would join a starting rotation that includes Mike Mussina, Kevin Brown, Carl Pavano and Jaret Wright.

The 41-year-old left-hander's current deal calls for a \$16 million salary in 2005, of which \$6 million is deferred at 2 percent interest. New York and Johnson's agents, Alan Nero and Barry Meister, were completing the structure of the new contract Thursday.

Arizona also has a preliminary agreement in place to trade Navarro and pitching prospect William Juarez to Los Angeles for outfielder Shawn Green and \$8 million. That deal is contingent on the Diamondbacks and Green agreeing to an extension.

— The Associated Press