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■ Women's basketball

Ducks secure No. 10 seed in NCAAs

Oregon will take on TCU in Seattle for the first round of the NCAA Tournament

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

There were far more cheers and sighs of relief than gasps when the Oregon women's basketball team was chosen as the No. 10 seed of the Tempe region for the 2005 NCAA Tournament on Sunday afternoon.

The NCAA selection committee's decisions were presented at a Pairings Party at McArthur Court that featured two large projection screens for a congregation of about 300 faithful Duck fans to view as they enjoyed free popcorn and soda.

The team had a front-row seat for all the action, and each player held her breath while ESPN announced the bracket placements for the Chattanooga and Philadelphia regions before calling out Oregon's name.

Oregon had to sacrifice a possibly higher seed than it received in order to be rewarded with the comfort of staying close to home at Bank of America Arena in Seattle, Wash.

"A lot of us thought we were going to be a six or seven (seed), but I think we're just excited that we got picked," said Oregon's Cathrine Kraayeveld, who is a native of Kirkland, Wash. "We're really excited to be in Seattle. We feel like it can be potentially a home court for us because it's so close, and hopefully we're going to get a lot of fans up there."

While the players were just glad to end a three-year absence from the Big Dance by being selected, the coaching staff was more thrilled about the traveling situation.

"I think the NCAA and their wisdom was very appropriate this year," said Oregon head coach Bev Smith, who has never appeared in an NCAA Tournament as a coach. "There will be a lot of interest in going to Seattle because we know the gym, and we know the area."

The Ducks (20-9 overall, 12-6 Pacific-10 Conference) learned that their first round opponent will be Texas Christian, which earned a seventh seed after finishing its season with a 23-9 record. The Horned Frogs were ranked No. 25 in the latest Associated Press poll once they claimed the Conference USA Tournament championship. They finished the regular season tied for third in the conference (10-4 C-USA) and entered the show-down as a No. 4 seed.

"A couple of us have played TCU, so that will be fun, and it gives us a chance to play them again," said



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Cathrine Kraayeveld led Oregon to a berth in the NCAA Tournament this season. The Ducks will take on Texas Christian in their first-round matchup in Seattle on Saturday.



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Point guard Corrie Mizusawa led Oregon with 6.9 assists per game and helped the Ducks finish in a tie for second place in the Pac-10.

Kraayeveld, who led Oregon in scoring and rebounding this season. She reached the NCAA Tournament her freshman year but did not play.

Kraayeveld is the only Oregon player to have prior experience in the tournament other than senior point guard Corrie Mizusawa, who attended with St. Mary's.

The work will be cut out for Kraayeveld and her front-court teammates as TCU's Sandora Irvin will be battling them in the paint.

"(We) don't know much about them, but they have Sandora Irvin," Mizusawa said. "She's the leading shot blocker NCAA history, so that's going to be a tough matchup for us,

especially our post players and our strong inside game."

Irvin became the NCAA record holder for blocked shots in a game with 16 against UAB on Jan. 16. The senior forward has accumulated 474 blocked shots throughout her career; the previous mark was 428.

This season, Irvin earned C-USA Player of the Year honors by averaging 20 points, 12 rebounds and 4.5 blocked shots per game. The Fort Lauderdale, Fla., native averaged 21 points and 13 rebounds in the two games of the C-USA Tournament. Her average of 3.5 blocked shots per game was two blocks better than any other player in the tournament.

Oregon's Andrea Bills has a hunch about what she is in store for with Irvin.

"I have my work cut out for me down low," the senior center said, though she is still looking forward to her first NCAA Tournament appearance.

"It's something I've waited for over the past four years," Bills said. "Finally it's happening, and I can't even speak on it right now, but I'm just glad to accomplish something like this."

The Ducks are 1-1 all-time against the Lady Frogs. TCU is 6-0 this season at neutral locations.

"We played them two years ago at the Papé Jam, and then we were down there last year to play them on their home floor," Smith said. "So while we have some familiarity with them, we still have to get down and study some tape."

Of all C-USA teams, TCU kept opponents to the lowest field goal percentage at .351. They also had the conference's best rebounding mark, averaging 44.8 per game.

For Oregon's seniors, reaching the NCAA Tournament selection provides closure for their long careers and especially this hard-fought season.

"We led our team this whole season, and we led them to this point at the NCAA Tournament," Bills said. "Our hope is to make a mark and leave some tradition here at Oregon."

Smith can now relax a little and focus on this week's practice.

"I'm just so excited and proud for our team and how they played this year," Smith said. "They weathered a lot of stuff over the last couple of years. It has not been easy, but it sure makes it feel so much greater when you've gone through that."

"To see our 'O' up there — going to Seattle — just relieved that tension (of waiting). Now we're back into preparation tension, which is the best tension to have."

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Advertisement
Oregon's Lead In National Contest Narrows

BY VICTORIA McDOUGAL

So far this RecycleMania season, Oregon has held first place in this very close race, but the margin has narrowed. Oregon's toughest competition has come from the defending national champion, Miami University of Ohio. Miami is now behind by only 0.01 pounds per resident.

Rival school Oregon State has given some tough competition, and maintained a spot in the top five schools, showing their recycling program's offensive power.

"It's time for Oregon to step up to the recycling bin and go the extra mile for the team. Individual efforts are key," says Robyn Hathcock, Housing Recycling Coordinator.

"It is up to each UO resident to pitch in. Right now we're ahead by 1 newspaper per resident per week. We can out-recycle the competition," Hathcock says.

In order to maintain the first place lead, residents need to get off the bench and contribute to the team's effort.

GO DUCKS!



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