

■ In my opinion



BRIAN SMITH
LEFTY SPECIALIST

A tribute to imaginative inventors in sports world

As kids, most of us who played sports either played football, baseball, basketball or soccer, right?

How come nobody wanted to play Gaelic football?

Lawn bowling? Curling? Cricket?

Hockey? (Kidding. Well, no. Not really.)

Some of the sports have rules that are set in stone, some are more flexible.

Some of them were games in which we participated during eighth grade gym class for two weeks, sandwiched somewhere between country line dancing and dodgeball.

Remember those?

The ones that are just slight variations of popular sports, only with more obscure rules in an effort to be deemed "original."

Remember those?

Most of the time, people (including me) get so focused on the big three or four sports that the results of, for example, the World Paddleball Championships, go unnoticed.

Even though paddleball may not make the highlights on ESPN, it is just one of hundreds of thousands of "sports" that exist worldwide.

For example:

Korfball, anyone?

It's basketball minus the dribbling and minus a player, created by a Dutch school teacher in 1895. Players are not allowed to shoot if they are being defended.

(Insert Portland Trail Blazers joke here.)

One of the more interesting sports is hashing. (Insert second Portland Trail Blazers joke here.)

Hashing combines the athleticism and skill of running with the athleticism and skill of drinking a beer after running a predetermined distance, namely to the next bar.

It is said that hashing was created in 1938 by a group of British company men, who started a hares and hounds running group. After they finished, the men would indulge in a bit of ale to cap off the evening.

Naturally.

According to the original charter, the goals of the group were: to promote physical fitness among members, to get rid of weekend hangovers, to acquire a good thirst and satisfy it with beer and to convince the older members that they are not as old as they feel.

Clearly, this has to become one of the next Olympic sports! Who needs diving?

I would be riveted to see a harrier four miles and four pints into the race, trying to complete the stretch run without using the fan-provided vomit bag.

Is running and drinking really a sport? I guess. Why not?

The broader point here is that there is no concrete definition as to what a sport is, so if you enjoy running and drinking and decide to call it a sport, fine. Enjoy and have fun.

Just to let you know, there is less than a year until the next International Rutabaga Curling Championships in Ithaca, New York.

If that's the kind of thing that floats your boat.

Just don't expect to see it on ESPN any time soon.

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■ Women's basketball

Ducks set standard for future teams

Oregon caps off its 21-10 season with a trip to the NCAA tourney and a No. 2 finish in the Pac-10

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon women's basketball team achieved most, if not all, of the realistic goals it set at the beginning of the season.

The Ducks finished the regular season tied for second place in the Pacific-10 Conference.

Several players were recognized for individual accomplishments.

And they made an appearance in the women's NCAA tournament for the first time since 1999.

The squad also saw a few of its most relied-upon, beloved players finish their collegiate careers.

After starting the season at 7-0, Oregon suffered its only loss at McArthur Court to then-ranked No. 10 Ohio State. Bev Smith's veteran team went on to a 9-2 start and opened the Pac-10 season with a pair of wins at home against California and former No. 5 Stanford, who reached the Elite Eight and earned a No. 1 ranking in the nation to end the season.

The Ducks finished with a 12-6 Pac-10 record and went undefeated at home against conference opponents.

Oregon's win over Stanford earned it the No. 2 seed in the Pac-10 Tournament in San Jose, Calif., where the Ducks defeated Washington in the first game before losing to Arizona State in the semifinals.

Nevertheless, tough play, a strong regular-season finish and noticeable resilience caught enough of the NCAA selection committee's attention for it to award Oregon with a No. 10 seed in the Seattle Regional of the Big Dance.

It was a lower seed than the Ducks expected, and they showed the committee that they may have deserved a higher seed with a minor upset of seventh-seeded Texas Christian in the first round.

However, Oregon hit a brick wall in the second round when it faced No. 2-seeded Baylor. The Lady Bears defeated the Ducks by a 23-point margin and have since reached the Final Four.

Though they were without a win in their final game, the Ducks expressed an overall sense of accomplishment in their play.

"I think we had an awesome season," said point guard Carrie Mizusawa, whose team finished 21-10 overall. "Everyone marked us as not going to the NCAA Tournament and not finishing high in the conference, but we accomplished those goals. It was a phenomenal job of fighting through adversity."

■ Women's lacrosse

Oregon battles veteran North Carolina

Nine of the Tar Heels' 12 starters from last season are on this year's fifth-ranked squad, including seven of the top eight scorers

BY STEFANIE LOH
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

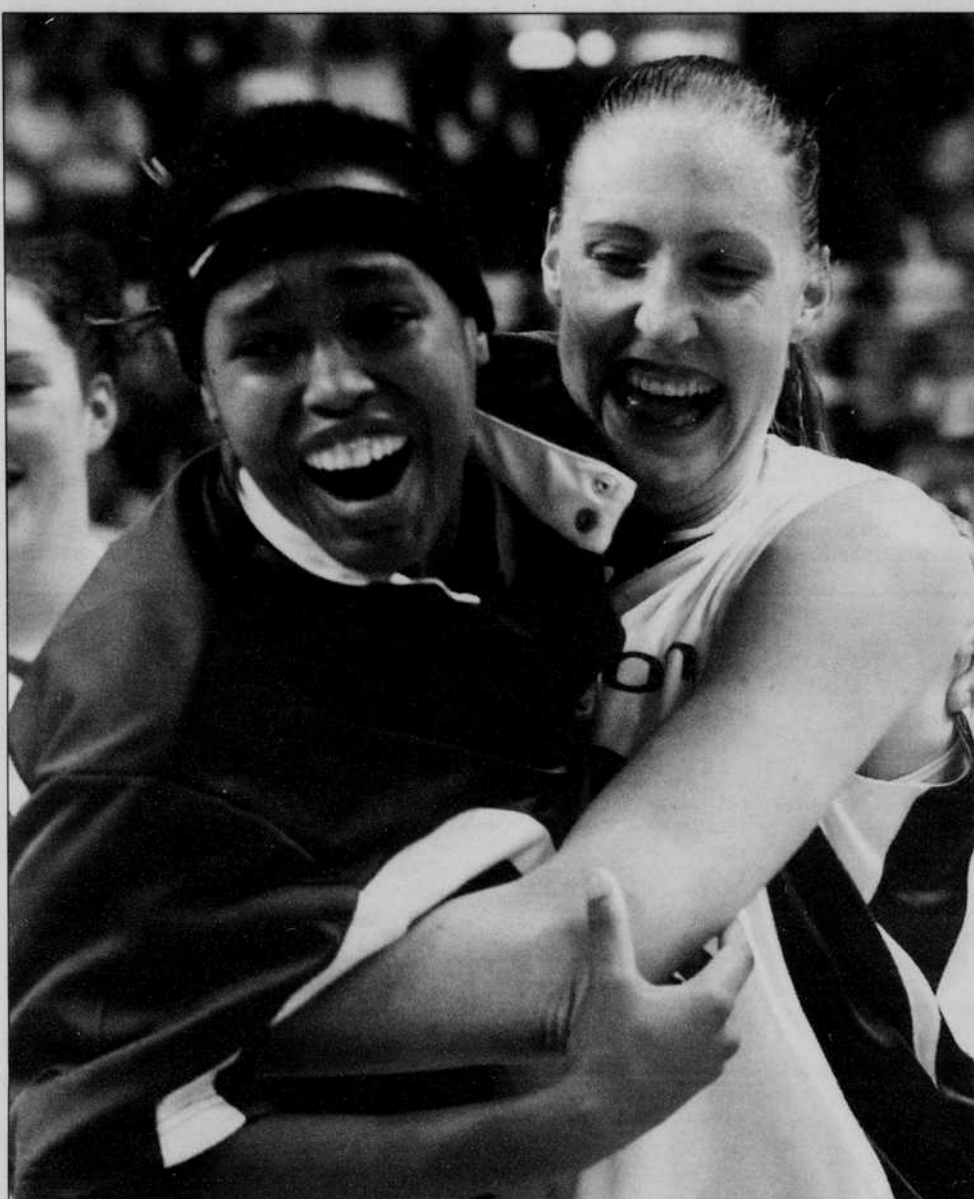
The Oregon women's lacrosse team (2-8) travels to North Carolina to face the Tar Heels on Friday and Davidson on Saturday.

North Carolina is ranked fifth in the nation and boasts an 8-2 record. Yet Oregon's head coach Jen Larsen seems unfazed.

"We're just going to play our hearts out, play 60 minutes of intense lacrosse and play better than we played in our previous game," she said. Larsen said she doesn't approach games with the win-loss columns in mind.

"I like to take things one half at a time. I don't talk about wins. If we win but didn't play well, then that's not an accomplishment," she said.

The Tar Heels' only two losses this season



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Oregon's Brandi Davis, left, and Cathrine Kraayeveld celebrate after the Ducks knocked off then-No. 5 Stanford, 62-58, at McArthur Court on Dec. 29. It was the only loss that the Cardinal suffered in Pac-10 play.

"I'm disappointed that we lost, but we had a championship season. We played hard and worked hard," she said.

Of course, what's a true season without the unfortunate inclusion of injuries as a result of hard work?

Junior guard Chelsea Wagner tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee against Washington on Jan. 13 at Mac Court.

"Losing Chelsea this year was tough for us because she was a really tough player for us both offensively and defensively," Smith said. "To lose her and to battle back into the postseason says a lot about this team."

Eventually, junior Brandi Davis filled the shooting guard position and provided big offensive numbers in a string of crucial games down the stretch.

Seniors Cathrine Kraayeveld and Mizusawa also dealt with minor injuries and illnesses. Eerily enough, everything happened against the Huskies. In the same game that the Ducks lost Wagner for the season, Mizusawa sat out with flu-like symptoms.

In the next meeting between the Ducks and Huskies, Kraayeveld developed a virally infected left elbow, limiting her shooting ability. Those

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and games against tough teams like North Carolina right now could lead to more wins in coming years.

Until then, Larsen is willing to be patient and watch her team grow.

"At times, I do wish we had some upperclassmen. But at the same time, I'm really happy with the group we have, because this is by far the most motivated group of girls whom I've ever worked with," she said.

After facing North Carolina, the Ducks will face an opponent on more equal footing in Davidson. The Wildcats have started this season 3-5 after finishing the 2004 season with a disappointing 4-13 record.

"What I want to focus on this weekend is countering our opponents' scoring, not having dry spells of our own and finishing strong. Regardless of what happens, I want us to play a full game and just keep pushing forward," said Larsen.

The Ducks are building a team of the future,