

■ In my opinion



BRIAN SMITH
LEFTY SPECIALIST

Great sports writers have the talent to define eras

If there is one thing that I have learned in my time of writing sports, it's this:

Sports writing is underrated.

It is comparable to any other skill in life, but as we all know, there are some people who just do it better.

There are thousands of really good sports writers in the country but only a few dozen truly great ones.

During the weekend, I was proud to be part of a workshop dedicated to the life of one of the best sportswriters in history: Jim Murray.

Before Thursday, I had never heard of Jim Murray — mainly because of generational differences and partly because my paper didn't run his syndicated column. By Saturday, I was wishing that my introduction could have been sooner.

Murray was one of those writers that people both hated and admired for the skill and ease by which he so easily took a prominent sports figure and showed him as a neighbor, a friend, a normal human being — much like people hate and love the awe-inspiring skills of some of the greatest athletes.

"Sandy's fastball was so fast some batters would start to swing as he was on his way to the mound," Jim Murray wrote in a 1961 column about Dodger pitcher Sandy Koufax. "His curveball disappeared like a long putt going in a hole ... Even if he does rout the record book, you will never know by looking at him. He will be the nice young man with the gentle brown eyes standing in the corner looking as though he had come in for autographs."

Or:

"His vicinity is anywhere between the foul lines," Murray wrote in a 1962 column about Willie Mays. "Sometimes the left fielder is instructed to go after only foul balls to keep out of Mays' way."

It's hard not to want to be able to write like that, but as young writers, we're given a temporary poetic license to borrow from great writers of the past. After all, we don't really know what our voices are yet. The only voices we know are those that we have grown up reading.

The point being that sooner rather than later, we take what we can learn and go off in search of that unique, singular "way with words."

Remember: Borrow, don't steal.

Great athletes are known when they can be discussed daily in class, on the bus or as the genesis of spontaneous conversations with total strangers.

Conversely, great sports writers can be identified when the athlete is the most prominent part of the story instead of the writer's sterling grammar or snappy prose.

Great sports writers are able to define their era, bringing out both the best and worst aspects and treating them both with equal grace and scrutiny.

And with different eras come different athletes with different stories.

I never covered Pete Rose.

I was never able to watch the rare ability of Koufax to win a game by just showing up on the lineup card.

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■ Women's tennis

Season ends with loss to Stanford

The team dropped two doubles and three singles matches in its second-round loss at the NCAAAs

BY ALEX TAM
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

The Oregon women's tennis team's run at the NCAA championships ended Saturday when the Ducks fell in the second round to No. 1 Stanford, 4-0, in Stanford, Calif.

Defending national champion Cardinal continued its undefeated season, winning all 23 of its matches. Oregon (17-8 overall) finished with its second straight 17-win season.

"Overall, it was a fantastic season, and these players have nothing to be ashamed of," Oregon head coach Nils Schyllander said.

The Cardinal captured the doubles point and took a 1-0 lead with doubles victories at the No. 1 and No. 3 positions. The 36th-ranked duo Amber Liu and Anne Yesley defeated Oregon's doubles team Daria Panova and Dominika Dieskova, 8-5, at the top spot.

At the No. 3 doubles slot, Oregon's Davina Mendiburu and Ester Bak lost to Stanford's Joanna Kao and Theresa Logar, 8-4.

"I thought we played solid doubles, but Stanford grabbed the point, and the momentum was in their favor," Schyllander said.

In singles action, Jamie Marshall, Anna Leksinska and Bak were defeated in each of their matches to give Stanford the 4-0 victory.

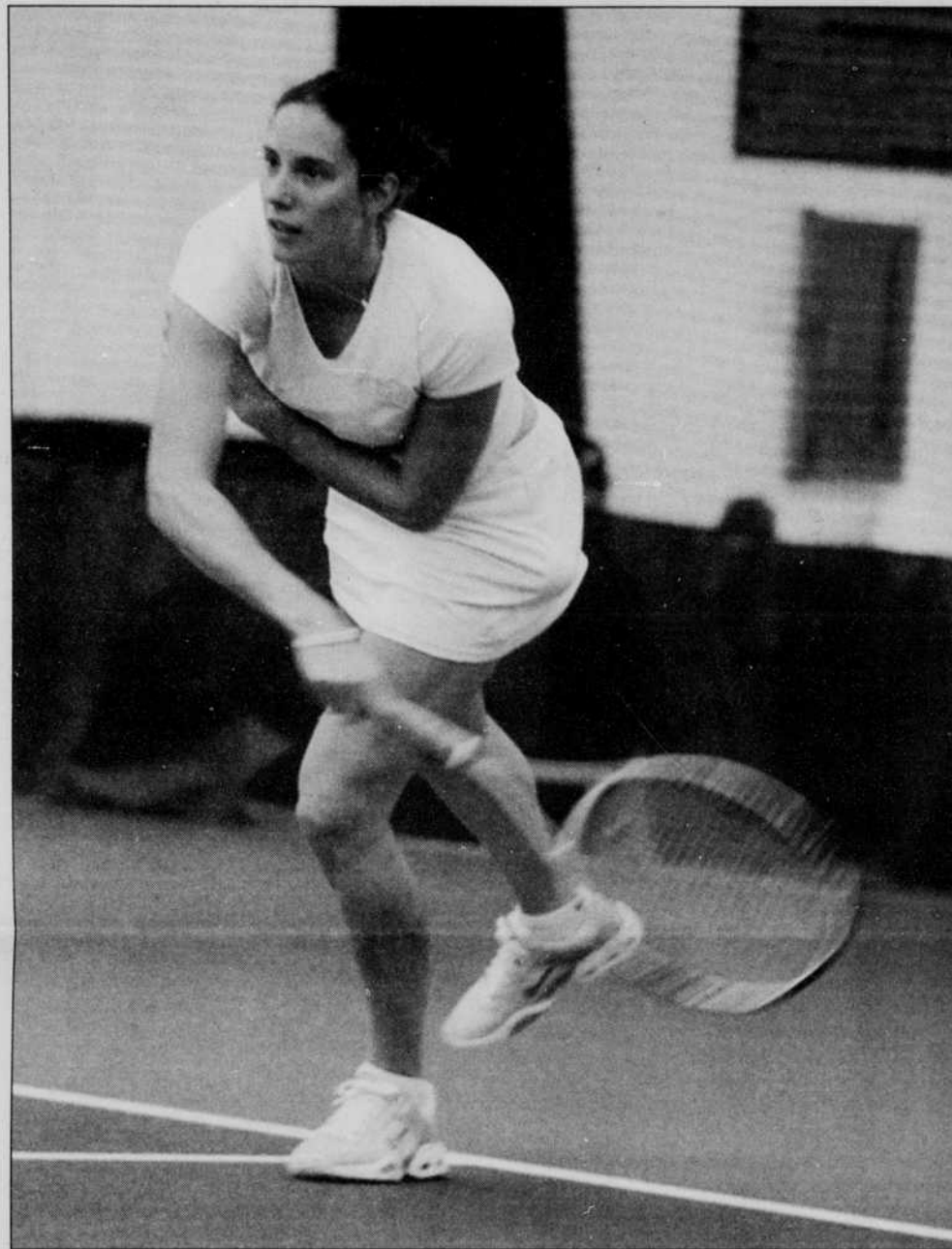
Panova, Dieskova and Mendiburu did not finish their singles matches because Stanford had already clinched the victory.

The Ducks advanced to the second round after defeating Fresno State, 4-2, on Friday. The win ended Fresno State's eight-match winning streak. Marshall led Oregon with a victory in both her doubles and singles matches.

Marshall and Leksinska teamed up to defeat the Bulldogs' Lucia Tallo and Jacqui Haskett, 8-4, at the No. 2 position. Marshall was then victorious against Courtney Jantz in straight sets, 6-4, 6-1.

"We've had a lot of players step up for us

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NICOLE BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER

Dominika Dieskova and the rest of the Ducks fell to Stanford, 4-0, in the NCAA Championships.

■ Women's golf

Nealy to represent Oregon at NCAAAs

Johnna Nealy received one of only two seeds given to players competing from a non-qualifying team

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

Johnna Nealy will compete at the NCAA Championships in Sunriver today as the lone representative of the Oregon women's golf team. The senior from Grants Pass will be one of 126 golfers playing in the finals, scheduled for four rounds at the par-71, 6,312-yard Meadows Course.

Nealy has been a driving force for the Ducks all season, delivering consistent performances each week. She has finished in the top 12 in four of the last six tournaments and leads Oregon with an average score of 74.8.

Nealy earned her first invite to the finals thanks to her outing at the NCAA West Regional two

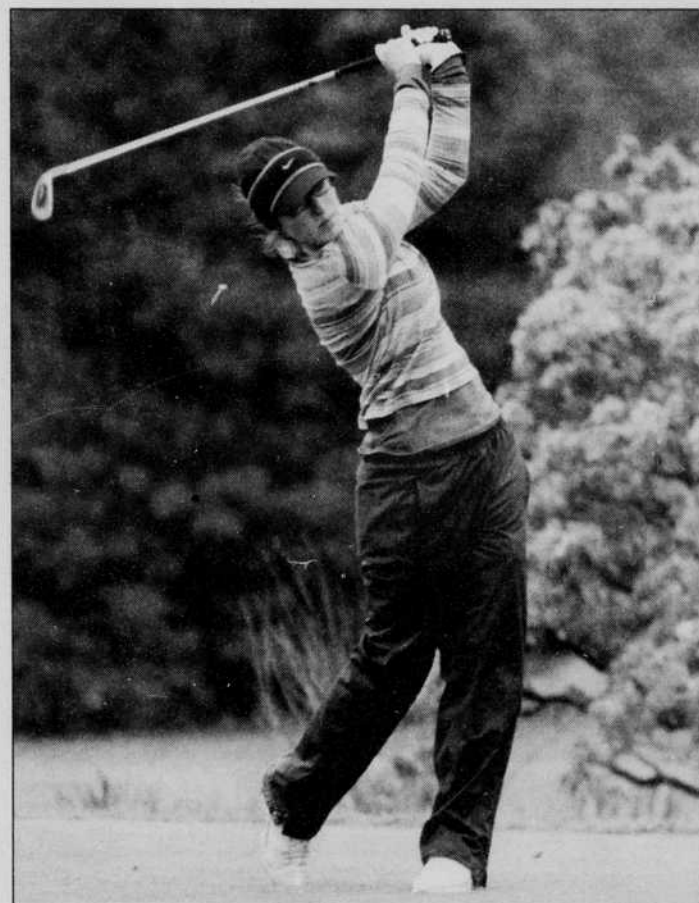
weeks ago; she tied for sixth place following a nail-biting two-hole playoff victory against Laura Leuthke of Fresno State.

Nealy said she is thrilled to have the opportunity to play among the nation's best.

"I am excited, but I wish my whole team was there, so that's kind of disappointing," Nealy said. "I'm really excited to go play and see how I match up against the rest of the country."

Nealy garnered one of two individual seeds given to players competing for a non-qualifying team from the West Regional—Oregon's 10th-place finish at the Regional was not enough to land the Ducks

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GEOFF THURNER | OREGON MEDIA SERVICES

Johnna Nealy competes today at the NCAA Championships in Sunriver.