

■ In my opinion



CLAYTON JONES
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

Interleague play will be plagued by lame games

Major League Baseball's Interleague play begins Saturday with the kick-off of "rivalry weekend," marking the creation's eighth year of trying to get people into stands as baseball's popularity fades.

But hasn't the novelty worn off?

Sure, New York's Subway Series is always a hot one, but do fans really care about their team playing a "rival" from another league?

In Chicago, Cub fans have a lot more to worry about than facing their cross-town rival (i.e. Can their starting pitching stay healthy?).

I bet White Sox fans are eager to beat the Cubs and try to move out from under their shadow in order to remind Chicago that they have been the better team this year.

The other matchup that may actually mean something is between the Los Angeles teams. The Dodgers and the Angels have both started the season strong, and this year will be the first that these teams face off with the city of Los Angeles represented in both of their names.

After that, nothing.

Most of these matchups either don't have any significance because the teams are playing bad baseball or because the so-called "rivals" are not rivals at all.

In the Bay Area series, both the A's and the Giants have been disappointing.

As a Cincinnati fan, it pains me to say that the battle for Ohio really isn't a battle at all.

Houston versus Texas?

The state has two teams in the NBA playoffs, so I don't think baseball will really be that important to them.

In the sunshine state, Tampa Bay plays Florida. I mentioned Tampa Bay, so this series doesn't matter.

St. Louis plays Kansas City ... who knew that the Royals were still a major league team?

Milwaukee travels to play Minnesota, ooh yah, eh? While they won't be playing on ice up there, the teams will be battling inside the dome.

In a matchup of old versus new, Atlanta and Boston square off. Now situated in Atlanta, the Braves played in Boston way back in the day. This would seem interesting if the Red Sox weren't already involved in arguably the best rivalry in sports with the Yankees.

Philadelphia visits Baltimore, but the big question is: Why aren't the Orioles facing their new neighbors, the Washington Nationals? Is it because the Nationals, formerly the Montreal Expos, are facing Toronto? I'm sure Canadians are eager to welcome home the team that left them.

Seattle will host San Diego. I don't know why; I guess it's because they are on the West Coast.

And in the there-is-nobody-close-and-you-have-no-rival contest, Arizona plays Detroit. Well, at least they are playing somebody from the other league; Colorado and Pittsburgh are the leftovers in the National League and get to play each other.

So, Major League Baseball, I beg you: Please go back to the old style; National League should only face the American League in the World Series.

The novelty is gone.

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■ Women's track and field



ZANE RITT | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon freshman Kasey Harwood, left, and senior Kayla Mellott will compete in the 400-meter hurdles at the NCAA West Regional meet May 27-28.

Hurdlers study science of strides

With an impulsive adjustment in her footwork, senior Kayla Mellott set a new personal record

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

Covering 400 meters of ground and clearing intermittently placed obstacles in about one minute resembles a graceful art form from the stands, but is treated as a science on the track.

Like all other events within the track and field sport, running a 400-hurdles race requires precision and extensive practice.

Hurdlers such as Oregon senior Kayla Mellott have to calculate how many strides they are going to take in between hurdles and

which leg they are going to leap from on each approach.

"Generally, you figure out what your stride pattern is going to be, and then you practice it and use it in every race," Mellott said. "I've used the same stride pattern for the last two years."

Last weekend, Mellott adjusted her stride pattern in between the preliminaries and Sunday's final race at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships.

"It's kind of a different idea to switch it up at the last minute," Mellott said. "I'd been thinking

for a while that I needed to change it a little bit, so I just figured, 'It's the Pac-10s, why not?'"

Teammate Kasey Harwood, who ran a season-worst 1:02.69 in the preliminaries, thought it was a daring but impressive move.

"It's unusual for someone this late in the season and this late in their career to be changing things like that," said Harwood, who still holds a regional qualifying mark, "but it was a bold move on her part, and I admire her for that."

Mellott's time of 1:00.24 in Saturday's preliminary race was not bad. It was .09 seconds slower than a personal record she set a week earlier at the Oregon Invitational.

"We noticed on her video in the

preliminaries that she was adding too many strides," Oregon assistant coach Rock Light said.

Mellott said she presented the idea of changing her stride pattern to Light shortly before the final race. Light said it made sense but that "it's hard to maintain the same stride pattern throughout the race."

Right before the gun went off, Mellott made her final decision.

"It's kind of like breaking a habit," she said. "It's definitely breaking away from what you're used to in a race, which is usually not recommended."

The move paid off as Mellott finished fourth and scored five

HURDLERS, page 16

■ Men's golf

Ducks aim for NCAA bid at Regionals

Oregon, seeded No. 21, starts play today against 26 teams, including Pac-10 champ Washington

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

The Oregon men's golf team tees off today in the first round of the NCAA West Regional in Palo Alto, Calif. The stakes are high for the No. 21-seeded Ducks as they and 26 other squads will compete at the par-71 Stanford Golf Course for bids to the NCAA Championships in June. The top 10 finishing teams will be awarded spots.

The Ducks are primed for a strong showing at the Regional

and should have a good shot at qualifying for the Championships if they play as successfully as they have been playing.

Oregon has been one of the hottest teams in the Pacific-10 Conference this spring, finishing no worse than seventh in five straight tournaments. So far, the highlight this season for the Ducks has been their first-place finish in March at the rain-shortened Western Invitational.

Following their fifth-place

finish at the Pac-10 Championships in April, Oregon head coach Steve Nosler credited the Ducks' turnaround in spring to his players' attitudes on the golf course.

"The boys have a very competitive nature," Nosler said. "They play hard, and they never settle for anything."

Leading the Ducks into the three-round tournament will likely be the same five golfers that Nosler has used nearly all this season: sophomores Matt Ma and Jay Snyder, and juniors Gregg LaVoie, Justin St. Clair and Chris Dukeminier.

Ma has found his way into the

number one spot on Oregon's roster thanks to his recent top-15 finishes in the last five tournaments. Ma currently leads the team with an average score of 72.6. Should the Ducks' season come to an end at the Regional, Ma may very well grab one of the two invites to the Championships awarded to the top two golfers playing from non-qualifying teams.

LaVoie is the lone Duck who has previous experience in Regional play. LaVoie was a part of Oregon's 2003 squad that advanced to the NCAA Championships. The Ducks failed to

GOLF, page 16