

"This is my last coaching job. The only place I'm going to coach next season, or ever, is Detroit, I think, in terms of ever."

LARRY BROWN | Detroit Pistons head coach

■ In my opinion



BRIAN SMITH
LEFTY SPECIALIST

Big business should leave sports alone for the fans

I'm not a fan of big business.

Especially when it mingles with the world of sports and then tries to ask for its phone number at the end of the night.

The more I think about the role big business plays in the world of sports, the more I realize I have been looking at sports from a 1940s or '50s perspective.

In 2005, sports is big business, and big business is sports.

Sorry, I need a moment to let that sink in.

I've always held out hope that players play for the game, not money, and that they play hard all the time instead of just before a contract expires.

And while I still think that kind of player exists, I understand it's now honestly all about the money.

Which is why the news that the National Basketball Association is toying with (or at least listening to) the idea of placing corporate logos on the teams' uniforms is really not that alarming.

Look at soccer, look at NASCAR.

Look at stadiums.

Watch television.

I know, I know, I've written about this before.

Just call me a libertarian, anti-business sports columnist.

It's all right, I understand.

Honestly, the more I think about the NBA renting out the chest of every player to the highest bidder, the more I really don't have a problem with it.

Why not let the owners make millions of dollars more?

Why not let the players ask for bigger contracts?

There certainly won't be any real, plausible benefit for the fans.

"The NBA is a business," Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban said in a e-mail interview with The New York Times. "And the only mistake is not to seriously consider revenue forms that make it financially stable."

Which means the fans, as usual, are at the mercy of the owners.

One of the arguments for using sponsors on uniforms is that it would give the team enough money to put a freeze on the rising prices of ticket sales, which would be a great benefit for the fans — a crucial element in gaining fan-wide acceptance.

"(These type of deals) walk the fine line," Paul Swangard, managing director of the Warsaw Sports Marketing Center said. "You have to give the fans something in return. Make the fans part of the benefit equation."

Catering to the fans? I wish I could say that with less sarcasm because that is one of the truest statements in sports. The problem with that is fans are somewhere around fifth or sixth on the list of concerns for owners, just below drug-bust contingency plans.

So, would a corporate advertising deal freeze or lower ticket prices?

Probably not. Especially if players started asking for bigger contracts, which would absorb the added revenue from having "New York brought to you by Dell" on the front of the jersey.

According to Swangard, the added revenue could go to additional player-community outreach programs, which could help the players build a

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■ Duck golf

A STROKE of brilliance

Gregg LaVoie will represent the Ducks at the NCAA Championships in Caves Valley, Md.

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

Earning a starting spot on any Pacific-10 Conference golf team is a feat fit only for those who have been swinging a club since childhood. Gregg LaVoie of the Oregon men's golf team has done both but had an extra advantage while growing up in Pasco, Wash., thanks to his father, Pat, who makes golf clubs for a living.

When asked if he was swinging a club by age nine, LaVoie responded with a smile and said, "Definitely not. I was playing in tournaments by age nine."

LaVoie has played a key role in leading the Ducks to the NCAA West Regional this season. It was there last week that the junior right-hander tied for 10th place and earned an invite to the NCAA Championships starting Wednesday in Caves Valley, Md. He will be competing as the first individually seeded Duck since Ben Crane in 1997.

Oregon head coach Steve Nosler has treasured having LaVoie on his roster this season.

"He has been tremendous lately and one of the main reasons why we got as far as we did," Nosler said. "He came on late and contributed at key times."

Prior to the Western Intercollegiate in late March, LaVoie had not posted a top-20 finish in any tournament this year. Oregon took home the team title at the Intercollegiate and LaVoie's season took off, sparked by a 12th place finish. He reached the podium the following week at the ASU Thunderbird Intercollegiate, taking third with a

low score of 68. He ended the regular season with two top-20 finishes, the latter being a 10th-place finish at the NCAA West Regional.

"I think it is great for Gregg and the University that he will be playing with the best at the NCAAs," Nosler said. "I just wish the team could have been there too."

The Ducks missed out on advancing to the Championships as a team after finishing tied for 14th at the Regional.

"We came out slow at the Regional just like we always do in tournaments," LaVoie said. "We battled back, but we could have done more."

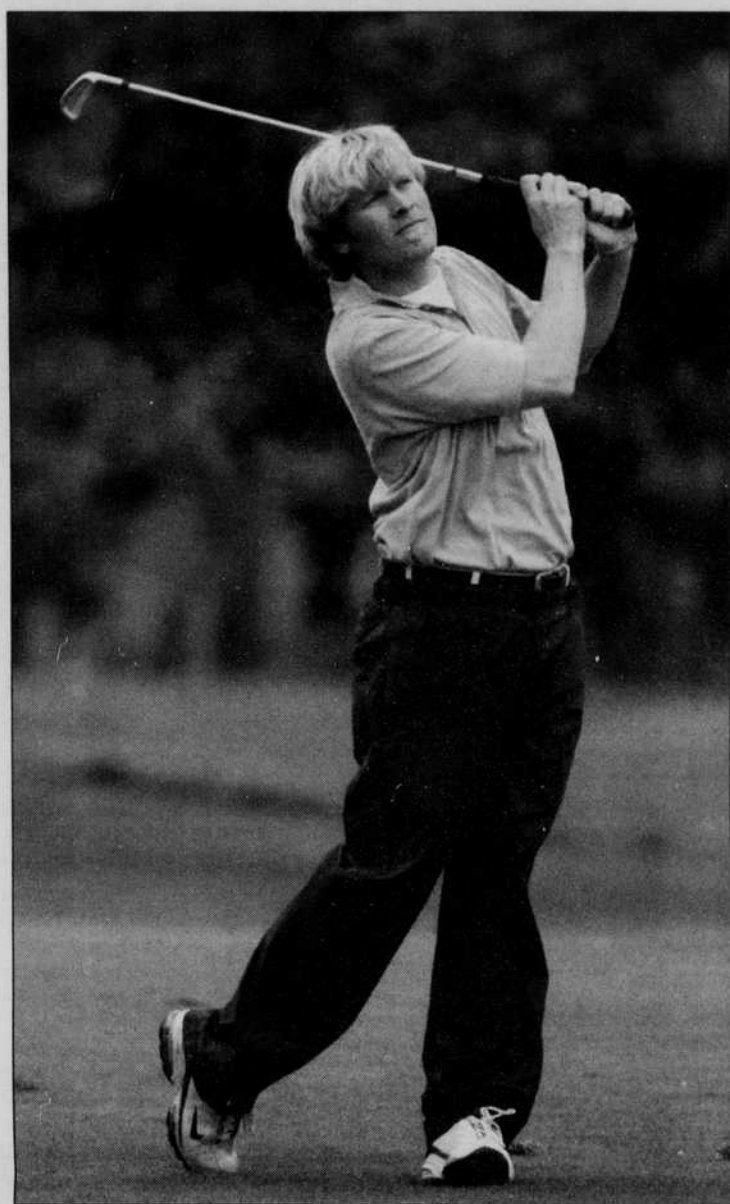
LaVoie was selected to play next week as one of the top two players competing for a non-qualifying team. This will be the second time in his career that he has reached the NCAAs.

Nosler said he likes LaVoie's chance of having a successful outing.

"He has been there before," Nosler said. "There will be stiff competition but he has as much of a chance as anyone in doing well. It is tough enough even qualifying for the Championships but he did it. He will be a big part of next year's team for us."

LaVoie is the sole survivor of the 2003 team that reached the Championships. While there as a freshman, LaVoie recorded the best round of any Oregon player with a 1-under 71 on the third day. He finished the tournament tied for 72nd.

"We have always had



GEOFF THURNER | OREGON MEDIA SERVICES

Oregon's Gregg LaVoie will begin play at the NCAA Championships on Wednesday in Caves Valley, Md. He is the first Duck to qualify individually since Ben Crane in 1997.

confidence in Gregg and there were certainly high expectations on him coming in," Nosler said. "It's really rewarding to see him playing the way he is now."

LaVoie has enjoyed a successful career thus far at Oregon, but before donning the green and yellow he was busy winning tournaments as a teenager under the guidance of his brother Ryan, who also golfed at Oregon. In 2002, Gregg became the 4A State Champion

while playing for head coach Tim Brown at Pasco High School. Before he was old enough to legally drive a car, at age 15, he was qualifying for the Tri-City Open — the youngest player ever to do so. His skill may have changed over the years, but his philosophy on the course has not.

"I go into every tournament without expectations," LaVoie said. "Golf is a sport you take one

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Baseball takes game 1 of World Series

Scott Sullivan pitched a complete game and allowed only three hits to help lead the Ducks over the North Carolina State Wolfpack, 3-1

BY LUKE ANDREWS
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

In one of his most important starts of the season, Scott Sullivan may have pitched the best game of his young career.

The sophomore from Beaverton threw a complete seven innings and allowed only three hits to help Oregon defeat North Carolina State 3-1 in the opening game of the National Club Baseball Association World Series.

"I was able to keep them off-balance with off-speed pitches," Sullivan said. "This is the best I've felt all year."

Sullivan retired the first 15 Wolfpack batters and pitched a perfect game through the first five innings.

Meanwhile, against North Carolina State's Justin Carver (5-0, 3.09 ERA), the Oregon offense provided Sullivan with just enough breathing room. The Ducks managed seven hits as a team.

"We did a really nice job of playing the type of baseball game we wanted to," head coach Bradley Ficek said. "We didn't let the pressure

affect us."

Oregon seized an early 1-0 lead in the second inning after Jerry Wahl-Stephens' sacrifice fly scored Jonathan Loomis.

In the fifth inning, Matt Oss reached base after he was hit by a pitch. The next batter, Jordan Denney, bunted and reached on a throwing error, which allowed Oss' pinch runner, Anthony Del Prete, to score. Marcus Denney's single then scored Jordan Denney, giving Oregon a 3-0 advantage after five innings.

North Carolina State managed its first real threat against Sullivan in the sixth inning and cut into the Oregon lead. After the Wolfpack's Chris Blackmon reached base on an error, Derek Saunders followed with an RBI double, putting North Carolina State on the board.

Later in the inning, with two outs and runners on second and third, NC State's Dustin Hutchinson stepped to the plate and represented the go-ahead run. But Hutchinson went after the first pitch from Sullivan and popped out to end the inning. Hutchinson, who led the Wolfpack team this season in doubles, triples and home

runs, finished the game 0-3 from the plate.

"I didn't throw to him any differently," Sullivan said. "I had gotten him out two times before, and I just felt that if I did the same thing I had before, we'd be all right."

Despite going seven innings, Sullivan kept his pitch count low, which might allow him to pitch later in the tournament. He finished the game throwing 67 total pitches, including five or less in two separate innings. The win improves Sullivan's record to a perfect 7-0.

"For him to step up like that and win our first world series game was excellent," Ficek said.

The Ducks now turn their sights to the defending national champion Colorado State Rams, who defeated Wisconsin Eau-Claire 4-0 on Wednesday. The game marks a rematch of last year's opening round, in which CSU prevailed 10-1.

"I think everyone is excited to face them," Ficek said. "They are a great baseball team and it's going to be a great game."

Oregon will send Jordan Denney to the mound. The junior will be making his second start of the season after a nine-strikeout performance in the regional tournament against UCLA. Ficek said the Ducks will most likely face CSU's All-American senior Thomas Ahnnes (8-0, 1.31 ERA). Game time is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. today.