

"It's not like we're going to have a sit-down."

Boston Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling stating his teammates' reaction to Theo Epstein's resigning as Red Sox general manager.

■ In my opinion



LUKE ANDREWS
EXCESSIVE CELEBRATION

Athletic association comes to its senses at last

Following the Oregon School Activities Association's decision to redesign its classification system last week, all I could say was: It's about time.

The previous classification model (only four divisions) was the worst imbalance of power I had seen since the 1994 San Francisco 49ers' Super Bowl champion team smoked the rest of the NFL with Jerry Rice, Steve Young, Ricky Watters and "Neon" Deion Sanders.

OK, I might be just holding on to the quickly fading glory days of a has-been dynasty, but that's a different column for a different day.

My real focus here is to applaud the OSAA's decision to change to six classifications structured around enrollment figures for Oregon's high school athletics and activities.

Coming from semi-rural Silverton High School, enrollment 1,091, we competed in the 4A division, making us one of the smallest schools in terms of population in that division.

Silverton's former conference (the Pac-9) consisted of six teams with enrollments of more than 1,500. There's a reason that Silverton's conference titles were few and far between.

I'm not implying that small schools don't have talent. They do. There is just much more of it at larger schools. Does it make sense to have a school with an enrollment of slightly more than 1,000 compete with schools that draw considerably more?

I liken this example to a non-league game earlier this season between the Ducks and Montana Grizzlies, a game Oregon won handily, 47-14.

There's good reason why Montana, a Division I-AA team, does not routinely play Oregon.

The number of Montana's athletes and scholarships simply is not equal to the numbers allowed to college football's major conferences like the Pacific-10.

While high schools can't give scholarships (Jesuit might argue this) enrollment numbers undeniably translate directly to on-field success.

Larger schools have a luxury that smaller schools don't — the benefit of more athletes who, because of numbers, can focus on offense or defense instead of being forced to play both sides of the ball. This is why the reclassification decision was such a necessary one.

The one major gripe about the OSAA's verdict may be the travel forced upon certain teams, namely the Salem-area schools, that now must travel to Redmond and vice versa, crossing the Cascade Mountains in the process — a disconcerting task, especially during the winter sports season. A few Eugene-area schools, Roseburg, South and North Medford and Grants Pass, are others that will incur more undesired time on the bus, but I guess this is another example that you can't please everyone all the time.

While I can't speak for the majority of the current high school athletes, I know I'd rather endure a few additional miles and be competitive than play in my back yard and get thumped.

It's about time the OSAA woke up and realized this as well.

landrews@dailyemerald.com

■ Women's basketball



NICOLE BARKER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Cicely Oaks reaches for a loose ball between two University of British Columbia players. Oregon used a 16-2 second-half run to break the game open.

Oregon women open exhibition season with win

Gabrielle Richards leads all scorers with 17 points to go along with her game-high 10 rebounds

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
SPORTS REPORTER

Oregon head coach Bev Smith saw promising but inconsistent play out of her squad in Monday's preseason opener against the University of British Columbia, prompting the fifth-year head coach to make it clear that Oregon has its work cut out for itself heading into the regular season.

"Offensively, we were pleased with some of the things we did," Smith said after Oregon's 78-59 win over the Thunderbirds. "Defensively, we still have a lot of work to do right now in terms of keeping people in front of us and making sure we don't allow the ball to get by us and not allow easy shots."

Smith saw weaknesses and areas in need of improvement. She also saw a great deal of potential in her players but feels they are still in need of game experience.

"There was a little bit of nervousness and anxiety if anything because they were not only (playing) with each other against an

opponent, but they were also doing this in front of a crowd," Smith said.

The 2,936 in attendance at McArthur Court saw Oregon play for the first time since its second-round exit at the hands of eventual national champion Baylor in the 2005 NCAA Tournament. They also saw senior forward Kedzie Gunderson return to action after missing all of last season with a knee injury. The Bellevue, Wash., native ended the night with two points and five rebounds in 15 minutes of play. She helped clean up under the rim along with teammate Gabrielle Richards, who led the Ducks with 10 rebounds.

"Our motion offense worked well," Richards said. "We had our perimeter shooters moving around a lot and it gave us a lot of time to make plays and put some shots up."

Richards also went 7-14 from the field, good enough to lead Oregon with 17 points to complete a double-double.

BASKETBALL, page 7

■ Duck soccer

Ducks lose 1-0 in overtime to Cougars

Oregon needs either a win or tie in last two games to secure the first winning season in school history

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
SPORTS REPORTER

Washington State handed the Oregon women's soccer team their first overtime loss of the season Sunday afternoon in Pullman, Wash. With only two games left in the regular season, the 1-0 defeat was the last thing the Ducks needed in their quest to earn two of the program's firsts — a winning season and an invitation to the NCAA Championships.

Both offenses were stymied throughout the game, heading into overtime scoreless, but the Cougars needed only 1:33 into the golden goal period before senior forward Alix Rustrum took a cross from teammate Shaye Harrel behind the Oregon defense and buried a shot past Duck goalkeeper Jessie Chatfield.

Two days after topping Washington for the Ducks' first conference win of the season, Oregon was riding high heading into this game, but Rustrum's game-winning goal was enough to make the Ducks (9-7-1 overall, 1-6 conference) and first-year head coach Tara Erickson quickly forgot Friday's win over the Huskies.

"The team was really disappointed to lose," Erickson said.

"We were up for this one. Washington State is a pretty good team, but we found out that we were able to play with them."

This season Erickson's squad has often come close to knotting the score with heavily favored conference opponents. The Ducks have been committed this year to ridding themselves of their losing ways seen in previous seasons, but as Sunday's game showed, their inability to score goals consistently has hindered their cause.

Not even senior forward Nicole Garbin could score against Washington State's defense. Garbin has been Oregon's most productive player on offense in 2005 and had a chance to put the Ducks ahead of the Cougars in the 75th minute with her specialty, which was a penalty kick. This time she met her match. Washington State's goalkeeper Katie Hultin got her gloves on Garbin's shot for a diving save. It was one of Hultin's three saves in the game and perhaps the biggest of the season for the Cougars, who are also on the hunt for postseason play.

"I don't guess. I just react," Hultin said after the game. "I think I had little more of an advantage because I know Nicole (Garbin)



KATE HORTON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior forward Nicole Garbin battles a USC defender on Oct. 16. Garbin leads the team with 10 goals, beating the former school record of nine.

and had played on a summer team with her. That gave me a little more adrenaline to make the save and I just knew it had to be done. We couldn't go down a goal."

Hultin's save gave life to the Cougars' offense, which volleyed a barrage of shots at Chatfield in the waning minutes of the second half. It was the most offensive action seen in the game, which featured a 16-4 shot ratio in favor of Washington State. Erickson felt the score heading into overtime was indicative of the game play.

"It was a back-and-forth battle," Erickson said. "Our defense and Jessie (Chatfield) played awesome, but give Washington State credit for finding a way to win."

Washington State head coach Matt Potter felt the same way

about the game and welcomed the win with open arms. It improved Washington State to 10-7-2 overall and 3-4-1 in conference play.

"It was a difficult game," Potter said. "Both teams are very evenly matched and it could have gone either way. We are ultimately very excited to get the win."

Oregon returns home to Papé Field Friday night to play its first of two weekend games to close out the regular season. The Ducks host No. 9 California Friday at 5 p.m. and Stanford at 1 p.m. on Sunday. A win or a tie this weekend guarantees the Ducks their first winning season in school history.

sadams@dailyemerald.com