

# Oregon State women reach first Final Four

Beavers set to face three-time defending national champion UConn on Sunday in Indianapolis

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**  
AP Basketball Writer

DALLAS — Jamie Weisner carried the trophy, and Ruth Hamblin had a net draped over her shoulders.

While the road to Oregon State's first women's Final Four has been quite a ride for those two seniors, it is even more remarkable considering the shambles the program was in when coach Scott Rueck arrived six years ago.

"I think that this day signifies just anything is possible," Rueck said. "It has to do with sports and the human spirit and that might be kind of deep, but that's what this is, a group that believed when there was no reason to, to see themselves through a Final Four. It's mind-blowing."

Sydney Wiese scored 18 points, including three free throws in the final 33 seconds to push the Beavers past Baylor 60-57 on Monday night in the Dallas Regional final — about 2,000 miles from their home, and only about 100 miles from the Waco campus of the top-seeded Lady Bears.

After having to conduct open tryouts to fill his first team, the Pac-12 champion Beavers (32-4) are going to Indianapolis with a roster of seniors and juniors recruited by Rueck.

"This journey has been incredible," said Wiese, a junior. "To have success with this group, we deserve it. We've earned it."

Next up is three-time defending national champion UConn on Sunday.

Baylor (36-2) finished its season with a regional final loss for the third consecutive season.

"This one hurts a little bit more because it's three times in a row," said Nina Davis, who scored 11 points. "We played hard. I can't say it was lack of effort."

Weisner, the Pac-12 Player of the Year who was the regional Most Outstanding Player, had 16 points while Hamblin had 10 points and 12 rebounds for the Beavers in their first regional final. Gabriella Hanson also added 10 points. Oregon State has won 22 of its past 23 games and has already set a school record for victories this season. They won the Pac-12 Tournament and shared the regular-season title, after last season winning the crown outright to end Stanford's run of 14 championships in a row.

"We're going to celebrate tonight, soak up this special moment," Hamblin said. "And we're going to get back to work this week and we know what we have to do to play UConn because they're obviously a formidable opponent."

Weise made her second free throw after being fouled by Alexis Jones with 33 seconds left. Jones, the former Duke transfer who led Baylor with 19 points, had a turnaround jumper that rattled around the rim without falling with 11 seconds left.

Hamblin, the 6-foot-6 center from Canada, grabbed the rebound and got the ball to Weise, who was fouled with 7.3 seconds left.

After Weise made both free throws, Baylor quickly got back down the court. Jones couldn't get off a shot before a missed 3-pointer by Niya Johnson, the senior point guard in her last chance for a Final Four.

"They did hit clutch shots and we didn't," Baylor coach Kim Mulkey said. "I mean, there was how many times we had a tie ball game there at the end and we didn't get a good shot."

Weisner scored twice in the final 2:07 of the third quarter to beat the shot-clock buzzer.

Baylor led only twice, after scoring the game's first four points and when Nina Davis made a layup with 6:54 left to make it 51-50. Davis had 11 points.

The game's only four ties came after that, the first when Weisner made a free throw 24 seconds later.

The Beavers were tough

and resilient throughout, and there was a point midway through the second quarter when Mulkey was so frustrated after a non-call by the officials that she ripped off her gold jacket and flung it over the Lady Bears bench, drawing a technical foul.

Davis was almost knocked to the ground when missing a layup, and that was the boiling point after the coach was already upset by several other calls or non-calls by officials.



Oregon State forward Deven Hunter, center, kisses the Division I Regional Championship NCAA trophy after a women's NCAA basketball tournament game against Baylor Monday, in Dallas. Oregon State won 60-57.

Brandon Wade  
AP Photo



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