

NCAA WOMEN'S TOURNAMENT

# Oregon reaches 1st women's Final Four

By ANNE M. PETERSON  
Associated Press

**P**ORTLAND — Thanks to another stellar performance from Sabrina Ionescu and a lift from a home-state crowd, Oregon is heading to its first women's Final Four.

Ionescu had 31 points, eight assists and seven rebounds, and the second-seeded Ducks beat No. 1 seed Mississippi State 88-84 on Saturday.

Satou Sabally had 22 points and seven rebounds for the Ducks (33-4), who head to Tampa to face the winner of today's game between top overall seed Baylor and Iowa.

At the final buzzer, Ionescu jumped into teammate Ruthy Hebard's arms, and coach Kelly Graves flashed an "O" with his hands to the crowd. The Ducks had been eliminated in the Elite Eight the past two seasons.

Teaira McCowan had 19 points and 15 rebounds in her final game for the Bulldogs (33-3), who had played in the NCAA title game for the past two seasons. Two of Mississippi State's losses this season were to Oregon, and the first one was a true road game.

This time, Mississippi State just felt like the away



Oregon guard Sabrina Ionescu celebrates the victory over Mississippi State.

AP Photo/Steve Dipaola

team, even though the Bulldogs wore their home whites. Attendance at the Moda Center was announced at 11,534, with the vast majority cheering on the Ducks — a tough draw for a top seed.

Ionescu's jumper put Oregon up 78-73 with just

under three minutes left. After McCowan made a pair of free throws, Ionescu added a 3.

Bre'Amber Scott's layup with 54 seconds left pulled the Bulldogs within 81-77, but Maite Cazorla answered with a 3-pointer for the

Ducks. Jazzmun Holmes' jumper cut the margin to five points with 26.4 seconds to go, but Mississippi State could not catch up.

Oregon also beat Mississippi State in December, ending the Bulldogs' streak of 46 consecutive reg-

ular-season nonconference wins.

Ionescu averaged 19.6 points, 8.3 assists and 7.5 rebounds going into Sunday's game. The Pac-12 Player of the year has 18 career triple-doubles, an NCAA record among men

and women, including eight this season.

The Bulldogs went up 15-8 early, but Sabally hit a 3-pointer that closed the gap as Oregon relied on its perimeter game. Ionescu's 3 tied it at 19, but the Bulldogs had free throws to make it 21-19 at the end of the first quarter.

The Ducks hit five of eight 3-pointers in the opening period alone.

Oregon pulled in front 30-27 on Cazorla's 3-pointer in the second quarter. The Ducks led 40-38 at the break. Ionescu led all scorers with 15 points, including three 3-pointers.

Hebard was tasked with guarding McCowan, but she collected a pair of fouls and went to the bench midway through the second quarter. But she opened the second half with a layup, and Ionescu added another to give the Ducks a 44-38 lead. Andra Espinoza-Hunter made a 3-pointer to close the gap.

Oregon held the edge until Howard's layup put the Bulldogs in front 54-53.

Mississippi State got a scare late in the quarter when McCowan went down hard on a layup attempt and stayed on the floor for several moments. She went to the bench holding the right side of her chest.

## Fuehring, Durr lead Louisville past Oregon State

By JOHN KEKIS  
Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — Sam Fuehring and Asia Durr each had 17 points and top-seeded Louisville clamped down on defense again, beating No. 4 Oregon State 61-44 on Friday night to reach the Elite Eight.

Oregon State (26-8), 0-3 against Louisville, sputtered in the third quarter to fall behind by 16 and couldn't recover in the rematch of a regional final last year that

Louisville won by 33. The Beavers shot 30.4 percent (17 of 56), just above their season low

Mikayla Pivec, who entered the game averaging 19.5 points in the tournament for Oregon State, finished with 17 points, the only player in double figures for the Beavers, who matched their season low in points.

Oregon State trailed 30-23 at halftime despite shooting 2 of 13 from long range and allowing six 3s at the other end. But

the Beavers missed their first six shots of the decisive third quarter and committed two quick turnovers, scoring just one point in seven minutes as the Cardinals began to slowly pull away. Consecutive baskets by Durr and a steal and layup by Dana Evans boosted the lead to 44-28 after three.

Oregon State had 30 turnovers in its two tournament victories and a negative turnover margin, but the Beavers committed just 12, allowing nine points from the mistakes.



Kathy Willens

Oregon State guard Mikayla Pivec battles for the ball with Louisville forward Sam Fuehring.

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