

Men's College Basketball

Tinkle has Beavers in the Big Dance

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

Just two seasons ago, Oregon State was in such disarray that new head coach Wayne Tinkle held open tryouts to build a roster.

Now the Beavers are headed to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in 26 years. A seventh seed in the West Region, Oregon State will face VCU on Friday in Oklahoma City.

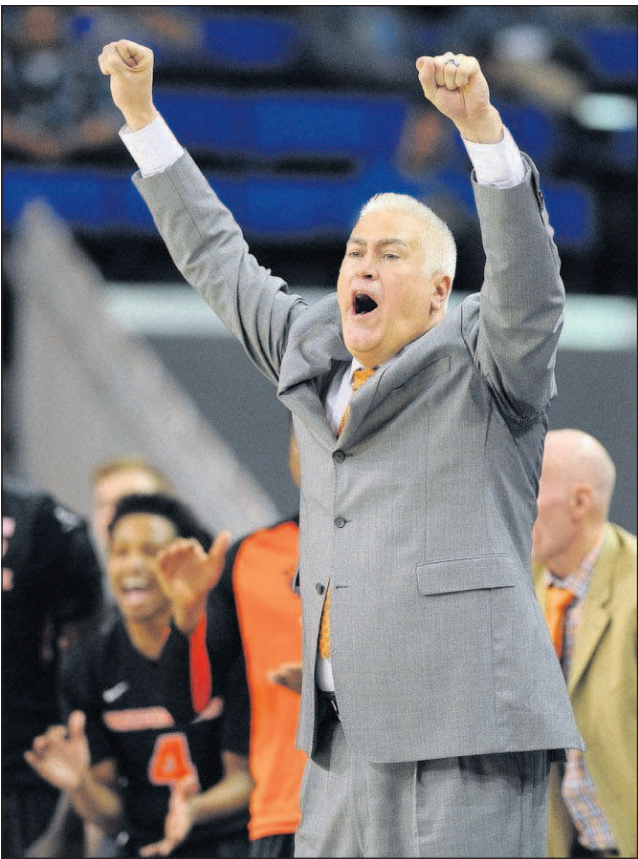
"It just says a lot about the people here and what can be done when you lock arms, and buy in and work together," Tinkle said.

Tinkle was hired in spring 2014 to take over for Craig Robinson, first lady Michelle Obama's brother. Robinson spent six years at Oregon State but was never able to take the team further than the CBI tournament in the postseason.

Tinkle's task was — and still is — daunting. Restore the luster to the once-proud program that went to the NCAA Tournament eight times between 1980-90. That run included Ralph Miller's Orange Express team in 1981 that went 26-2.

Tinkle came to the Beavers from Montana, where he led the Grizzlies to the tournament three times during his eight-year tenure. Montana finished below .500 only once under Tinkle, but he was unable to lead the Grizzlies to victory in a tournament game.

He inherited an Oregon State team that had gone 16-16 the previous season and was ousted in the first round of the CBI by Radford. The roster was decimated by graduation and transfers, and had no returning starters.



In this March 5, 2016, file photo, Oregon State head coach Wayne Tinkle reacts after his team builds a lead against UCLA at an NCAA college basketball game in Los Angeles.

AP Photo/Michael Owen Baker, File

After open tryouts, Tinkle assembled a team that included seven walk-ons. So it was a big surprise when those players went on to win a record 15 straight home games at Gill Coliseum and finish 17-14.

This season the Beavers went 19-12 overall and finished sixth in the tough Pac-12, which sent a record seven teams to the NCAA Tournament. Oregon State's victory over Arizona State to open the conference tournament likely sealed the team's postseason bid.

But the Beavers' path to the Big Dance was hardly smooth.

In January, senior forward Jarmal Reid was suspended at least four games for tripping a referee late in a loss to Utah. Before the final road trip of the season, the Beavers lost freshman forward Tres Tinkle, the coach's son, to a foot injury.

Oregon State lost five of six games in January, but a last-second win against Utah sparked a resurgence. The Beavers trailed 69-68 when Stephen Thompson Jr. was fouled by Utah's Brandon Taylor

on a last-second half-court attempt. He made all three free throws.

Thompson, the son of assistant coach Stephen Thompson, also made a buzzer-beating 3-pointer against Washington as the Beavers won six of the regular season's final nine games.

"The big thing was our guys understood that they needed to listen and do things our way instead of trying to do it their way. We became a much better team. We grew through some adversity and some of the growing pains," Tinkle said. "Guys stopped worrying about whether they were starters or how many minutes they were playing. They bought in."

The Beavers have been led by senior guard Gary Payton II, son of the former NBA great, who tops the team with 15.9 points, 7.9 rebounds and 5.1 assists per game.

The last time the Beavers went to the NCAA Tournament, in 1990, the elder Gary Payton was on the roster.

"It's just incredible. We put in hard work the last two years and just had the same mindset, keep battling every day, in practice, and in every game," the younger Payton said. "Just battle. And it's paid off. But we're not done, you know?"

Tinkle had been under the weather the past several days, which made the wait for Sunday's announcement even more difficult.

"Now that it has come and gone, I'm thrilled for our guys," Tinkle said. "Now we can move on to the logistics of getting stuff on VCU, setting up travel plans, a travel party, but most importantly, putting a game plan in place."



No. 8 Oregon routs No. 12 Utah in Pac-12 championship

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The Pac-12 championship got its marquee matchup, pitting the top two teams from the regular season against each other in the electric atmosphere of MGM Grand Garden Arena.

Oregon turned it into a Duck dynasty.

Tyler Dorsey scored 23 points, Dillon Brooks added 18 and No. 8 Oregon made it an early rout, rolling over No. 12 Utah 88-57 on Saturday night.

"It was just our night," Oregon coach Dana Altman said. "Not the game we anticipated, but we just got on a roll and that happens."

Oregon (28-6) won the regular-season title and Utah (26-8) was right behind. They held up through the conference tournament, setting up a matchup worthy of a neon



Oregon forward Dillon Brooks holds up part of the net after Oregon defeated Utah Saturday in Las Vegas. Oregon won 88-57.

AP Photo/John Locher

marquee on the Strip.

The Ducks turned it into a flyaway, putting on a defensive show to sweep conference regular-season and tournament titles for the first time.

Harassing the Utes across the

court and jumping into passing lanes, the Ducks had 13 steals and scored 28 points off the Utes' 20 turnovers.

Oregon was just as good on offense, shooting 52 percent while making 11 of 22 from 3-point range

in its eighth straight win. Chris Boucher had 15 points and tournament MVP Elgin Cook added 11 with six assists.

The Ducks also scored 23 points off 17 offensive rebounds and had 16 assists with seven turnovers to win their fourth Pac-12 title in the second-most lopsided game in tournament history.

The dominating performance gave Oregon its best record after 34 games since 1938-39 and put it in position for a potential No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

"I wouldn't want to play them. I know that," Utah coach Larry Krystkowiak said.

After a surprising run to last year's title game, the Ducks have become the Pac-12's dominant force, their flock of beat-you-off-the-dribble high-flyers causing matchup problems for anyone who tries to stop them.

Ducks top out West for first No. 1 seed

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Oregon is a No. 1 seed for the first time in program history. Rival Oregon State is back in the bracket for the first time in a generation, led by the son of the school's greatest player.

Former rivals Texas and Texas A&M could rekindle their hate-hate relationship with a win, part of a Big 12-themed portion of the bracket.

And Duke and UNC Wilmington are leaving North Carolina to play each other in Rhode Island of all places.

Yep, it's going to be a wild West Region in the NCAA Tournament.

It starts with those high-flying Ducks.

Coming off a sweep of the Pac-12 regular-season and tournament titles, eighth-ranked Oregon (28-6) is the top seed in the West and will play in Spokane against the Holy Cross-Southern winner from the First Four.

Despite their best season in 77 years, the Ducks are the least-hyped top seed, and got a lot less attention than some No. 2 seeds like Michigan State and Villanova. But the 88-57 win over 12th-ranked Utah in the Pac-12 final propelled the Ducks to No. 1 in the West.

"I wouldn't want to play them, I know that," Utah coach Larry Krystkowiak said after Saturday night's game in Las Vegas.

Oklahoma is the No. 2 seed, Texas A&M is third, Duke fourth and Baylor fifth in the region that will conclude in Anaheim, California, March 24-26.

Get past the First Four winner, Oregon will move on to face the winner between Atlantic 10 champion St. Joseph's (27-7) and Cincinnati (22-10).

"We're certainly pleased with where we're at, but we're not satisfied," Oregon coach Dana Altman said.

Oklahoma (25-7) and national player of the year front-runner Buddy Hield will start the NCAA Tournament close to home, facing Cal State Bakersfield (24-8) just 20 miles up the road in Oklahoma City.

The sixth-ranked Sooners were on pace to be a No. 1 seed, but a last-second loss to West Virginia in the Big 12 semifinals — after a mid-court heave by Hield was overturned upon review — left them at No. 2.

Get past Cal State Bakersfield, and Oklahoma will play the winner between Oregon State (19-12) and Atlantic 10 runner-up VCU (24-10). The Beavers ended a 26-year NCAA Tournament drought and were one of a conference-record seven Pac-12 teams.

"It's fun to have the Beavers go dancing again," Oregon State guard Gary Payton II said.

After that, the Sooners may face some familiar foes, with three other Big 12 teams and former Big 12 member Texas A&M playing in the West Region.

Texas (20-12) had a terrific rebound season in its first year under coach Shaka Smart and will take on Missouri Valley champion Northern Iowa (22-12) in Oklahoma City.

That could set up a possible rivalry-rekindling game.

Texas and Texas A&M were longtime rivals before the Aggies move to the SEC four years ago, and could play in the second round.

The 17th-ranked Aggies (26-8), who lost to Kentucky in the SEC title game, have their highest seeding as a program and will face Horizon League champion Green Bay (23-12) in the opening game. Texas A&M is 4-0 against teams from the Big 12 this season.

"You look at our schedule and who we've beaten, we played so well in the tournament here and lost to a really good Kentucky team, basically in their home court," Texas A&M coach Bill Kennedy said. "So we're playing well now. We're excited about it."

Baylor (22-11) opens with a potentially-difficult game in Providence, Rhode Island, facing Ivy League champion Yale (22-6), which is in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1962, despite the dismissal of team captain Jack Montague.

The Bears lost four of six to end the season and fell to Georgia State as a No. 3 seed last season, so they're wary of taking anyone lightly.