

Women's College Basketball

Oregon State women go from shambles to Sweet 16

By STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

DALLAS — Scott Rueck has taken Oregon State's women's basketball program from shambles to the Sweet 16 in less than six years.

The coach who had to conduct open tryouts to fill his first roster with the Beavers now has a team full of seniors and juniors he recruited. They are having fun on and off the court, part of two Pac-12 regular season titles to end Stanford's run of 14 in a row, and already with a school-record 30 victories this season.

"The core of us have just been together, kind of grown up together," senior guard Jamie Weisner said.

Oregon State has been in the Sweet 16 only once before. That was in 1983, before the women's NCAA Tournament expanded to 64 teams.

"We're focused and I think we're having fun, and that's been translating to how we play," senior center Ruth Hamblin said. "You see us having fun together and that's when we are playing our best."

After opening with two wins on their home court as the No. 2 seed in the Dallas



#6 DePaul
Blue Demons
(25-8)



#4 Oregon St.
Beavers
(28-4)

• Saturday, 3 p.m. (ESPN)
• at American Airlines Center, Dallas

Region, the Beavers (30-4) play Saturday night against sixth-seeded DePaul (27-8) in the home arena of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks. They have won 20 of their last 21 games.

"The stage is bigger, no question," Rueck said. "It's been a gradual progression and I think that kind of epitomizes our program, just the gradual progression from one thing to the next."

DePaul is in its 14th consecutive NCAA Tournament under coach Doug Bruno, who is in his 30th season. This is the Blue Demons' fourth Sweet 16, getting here after a win at No. 3 seed Louisville.

"We weren't nervous going into the first two games and we knew what it took to win," senior Megan Podkowa said.

The Blue Demons, who have won the last three Big East regular season championships, average 81 points a



Oregon State head coach Scott Rueck, center, looks on as he players run drills during college basketball practice in the regional semifinals of the women's NCAA Tournament Friday, March 25, 2016, in Dallas. Oregon State takes on DePaul on Saturday.

game.

"DePaul loves to score. They love to get out in transition and they love to run," Rueck said. "We want to be able to control tempo, so this game is going to be a contrast in that regard."

A few things to know when DePaul and Oregon State meet for the first time:

SHARING THE BALL: DePaul is averaging an assist

on 66 percent of its field goals, and is third nationally with 20.8 assists per game — behind Connecticut (21.5) and Baylor (21.1). "The best teams year in and year out, at any level, are sharing teams," Bruno said. "I just think it's something we create as a culture. It's something we do recruit, visual athleticism, the players that have the ability to pass." Junior guard

Jessica January said Bruno has told his players they have the "greenest green light" in the country to shoot when they are open, but to pass the ball when they're not. "That's what DePaul ball is, and that's what we try to do," she said.

DIFFERENT INSIDE: Hamblin knows she has to play things a bit differently since DePaul doesn't use a

traditional center. On defense, she can't hang out in the paint as much and has to get out and contest shots. "But offensively, hopefully you want to bury them down low and take advantage of the size mismatch," said Hamblin, who averages 11.9 points and 9.9 rebounds a game.

SELECT COMPANY: DePaul is one of six teams to appear in each of the last 14 women's NCAA Tournaments. The others are Connecticut, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Stanford and Tennessee. Missing from that group is Baylor, the No. 1 seed in the Dallas Region that the Blue Demons could potentially face for the second time this season if they win Saturday.

COMMON OPPOSITIONS: Oregon State and DePaul had three common opponents. Both beat St. Bonaventure and Marquette and lost to Notre Dame in December (Oregon State lost 62-61, and DePaul fell 95-90). DePaul beat St. Bonaventure in the second game of the regular season, and the Beavers beat the Bonnies last week to advance to the Sweet 16. The Blue Demons twice beat Marquette in Big East Conference play.

Men's College Basketball

Oregon meets Oklahoma in Elite Eight

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Lon Kruger and Dana Altman are headed to Scotland in July for the latest golfing adventure in their three-decade-long friendship.

"We're still doing that, I guess, regardless of what happens tomorrow," Kruger said with a wry smile Friday.

Indeed, the coaches first have a date in Orange County on Saturday, and it won't be quite as much fun for either of them.

Altman's top-seeded Oregon Ducks (31-6) are facing Kruger's second-seeded Oklahoma Sooners (28-7) in the West Region final for a spot in the Final Four.

Kruger and Altman hoped they would never have to coach against each other, and they had managed to avoid it throughout their parallel careers. But with two powerhouse teams heading into a landmark game for both programs, this coaching collision is unavoidable.

"When the pairings came out a couple weeks ago, I talked to Coach," Altman said Friday. "We just said at that time that if we're fortunate to get to this point, at least one of us is going to go to the Final Four."

Their friendship came out of a calculated acquisition by Kruger in 1986 when he hired Altman to join his staff at Kansas State. Kruger wanted Altman's youthful energy and smarts — but he really wanted Mitch Richmond and a handful of Altman's other players on



Oregon forward Dillon Brooks, center, looks on between teammate forward Elgin Cook, left, and guard Tyler Dors-ey, right, during a news conference before an upcoming regional finals basketball game in the NCAA Tournament Friday, March 25, 2016, in Anaheim, Calif.

the nation's top-ranked junior college team in Missouri.

Their three years together led to three NCAA Tournament berths and the start of an enduring bond.

"We've got a handful of coaches that are best friends, and certainly Dana is one of them," Kruger said.

Kruger reached the 1994 Final Four with Florida, but hasn't been back since. Altman has never reached the Final Four in a quarter-century in charge of four programs.

The West finale is both a test and a celebration of their careers. The coaches have built remarkably similar teams, with both relying on deep, balanced rosters of athletic players surrounding an elite scorer: Oklahoma's Buddy Hield and Oregon's Dillon Brooks.

"Both clubs prefer the (high) pace," Kruger said. "They prefer the tempo. We certainly are better when we're able to go. I think they are, too."

Some more things to consider in these schools' first meeting in 75 years:

UP ON OREGON: Saturday is a historic time for the Ducks, who won the Pac-12 regular-season and tournament titles to earn the first No. 1 seed in school history. The Ducks have rolled into the regional final with a school-record 31 wins, but they realize they can't reach their first Final Four since 1939 in a building likely to be packed by their West Coast fan base.

UP ON OKLAHOMA: The Sooners' core four of Hield, Ryan Spangler, Jordan Woodard and Isaiah Cousins



#2 Oklahoma
Sooners
(25-7)



#1 Oregon
Ducks
(31-6)

• Sunday, 3:09 p.m. (CBS)
• at Honda Center, Anaheim

will start its 104th consecutive game together, along with 36 straight starts by Khadeem Lattin. OU is after its first Final Four trip since 2002. "We ride and fight all together, so I think ending on a good note would be special for us," Hield said.

STOPPING FIELD: The Oklahoma starters' collective experience and togetherness is remarkable in the modern game. The Ducks are appropriately impressed, but they're also determined to defend the perimeter against Hield and his teammates, who have the second-best 3-point shooting percentage in the nation (.426). "We haven't seen a team like this with a core group that's been there for all four years, and we've never seen a player who shoots the ball like Buddy Hield," Brooks said. "We're really going to have to run them off the line and not let them get easy baskets."

JUICY HISTORY: These schools actually met in the first NCAA Tournament back in 1939, when Oregon beat Oklahoma in the West Region final in a game played on Treasure Island in the middle of San Francisco Bay. Oregon went on to win the national title. The schools met again in the 1940-41 season, and they haven't met since then.

ALTMAN: Brooks expresses remorse for publicising comments

Continued from 1B

"At the end of the game, there was a difference in the shot clock and the game clock," Altman said. "I told Dillon to shoot it. So if anybody's got a problem with it, it should be directed at me. He was acting on my orders. I told him to shoot it. I didn't think he'd make it. It was a 30-footer, but there was a five-, six-second difference there."

The cameras caught a postgame exchange between Krzyzewski, who appeared to say something to Brooks about the celebration.

"He just told me that I'm too good of a player to be showing out at the end," Brooks said in the locker room following the game. "And he's right. I've got to respect Duke."

But Krzyzewski disputed Brooks' account of the postgame message, appearing angry when it was brought up in the postgame press conference.

"I didn't say that," Krzyzewski said. "You can say whatever you want. Dillon Brooks is a hell of a player. I said, 'You're a terrific player.' And you can take whatever he said and go with it, all right?"

Brooks expressed remorse Friday when he realized how much attention had been given to the inconsequential basket.

"Me and Coach K, that conversation should have stayed with us," Brooks said. "But overall, me and Coach K are both professionals and I have to move on from this situation and focus on Oklahoma."

Brooks doesn't make any attempt to hide his fiery persona on the court. He acknowledges that his brash play occasionally is detrimental, but has learned to harness it into productive play for the most part.

Yet Brooks doesn't plan to tone himself down in the West final against Oklahoma. He said he'll bring the same energy that he's brought all year.

"It's been a hassle all of my life to figure out how to channel it and find ways to put it to great use," Brooks said. "I feel like I've found a way and I have to bring it every day. I can't pull it back because I've tried that already and it hasn't worked to any good extent. I've just got to keep playing with emotion and live or die by it."

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