

No. 15 Oregon hopes for consistency this season

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

EUGENE — Payton Pritchard wants Oregon to dominate from the start this year.

The Ducks are No. 15 in the AP preseason poll. They were ranked at the start of last season, too, but before their surprising run in the NCAA Tournament they had a number of early losses that dropped the team out of the Top 25. They finished 25-13 overall and 10-8 in the Pac-12.

This season, the Ducks don't want to be a surprise.

"We're really motivated for this year because I felt like last year, I guess my last two seasons, my sophomore and junior seasons, we played down in the regular season," Pritchard said. "Definitely didn't play how we wanted to and finish how we wanted to, so we're looking forward to the beginning of this season. We kind of want to make a statement and change the narrative of how it's been lately."

Oregon rebounded last season by winning the Pac-12 tournament for an NCAA berth, then defeated Wisconsin and UC Irvine as a No. 12 seed before falling to Virginia in the Sweet 16.

This season the Ducks were selected to win the Pac-12 title in the preseason media poll. But they'll have a decidedly new look.

Oregon returns just three scholarship players from last season's team: Pritchard, Will Richardson and Francis Okoro. Starters Kenny



In this March 16, 2019, file photo, Oregon celebrates after defeating Washington 68-48 in an NCAA college basketball game in the final of the Pac-12 men's tournament in Las Vegas.

Wooten, Paul White and Louis King have all moved on.

Oregon landed some high-profile prospects with a recruiting class considered among the top five nationally, including 6-foot-11 center N'Faly Dante from Kansas and 6-foot-9 power forward C.J. Walker from Florida. Also joining the Ducks is national junior college player of the year Chris Duarte. Shakur Juiston and Anthony Mathis are graduate transfers.

The newcomers will work

around Pritchard, who averaged 12.9 points, 4.6 assists and 3.9 rebounds last year and was named the Pac-12 tournament's most outstanding player. He went through the NBA draft process after last season but ultimately decided to stay at Oregon for his senior year.

"We have a lot of work to do. We have a lot of new players. I think they're talented and are a good group, but we've got a lot of new faces to try to blend together and try to get to work together,"

said Oregon coach Dana Altman, who is in his 10th season.

CLOSING IN

Pritchard is closing in on several Oregon records his senior season. If all goes well, he should leave the Ducks as the career leader in assists, steals, wins and career games played. With 1,803 career points, he likely won't break Ron Lee's career record (2,085) but could surpass Luke Jackson for second place.

"To watch Payton grow over four years, he was our point guard on our Final Four team, and last year really exploded to take us to the Sweet 16. He's a talented young man that's driven," Altman said. "He works very hard at his game. You love players like that."

DEPARTURES

Heralded recruit Bol Bol left Oregon after just one season, during which he was limited to just nine games because of a foot injury. The son of the late Manute Bol was a second-round pick in the NBA draft and is currently on a two-way contract with the Denver Nuggets.

Louis King played just one season at Oregon as a freshman before declaring for the draft, but he was not selected and is now on a two-way deal with the Detroit Pistons. Kenny Wooten, who was a sophomore last season, also declared and went undrafted. Picked up by the Knicks, he was waived before the start of the NBA season.

THE WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART

Dante won't be able to play right away because he was not cleared in time by the NCAA after graduating early and reclassifying as a 2019 signee in August. He has said he'll enroll for the winter term on Dec. 14, which means he'll miss at least nine games. A native of Mali who has a 7-foot-5 wingspan, Dante chose Oregon over Kentucky.

Beavers have lofty goals in Tres Tinkle's last season

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

CORVALLIS — Wayne and Tres Tinkle are looking to make their last father-and-son season at Oregon State memorable.

Tres Tinkle, the son of head coach Wayne Tinkle, is a senior this year. He considered leaving for the NBA in the offseason but ultimately decided to return to the Beavers. That means he'll have one more chance to do something with his dad that Oregon State hasn't managed since his first year: Make

the NCAA Tournament.

But first, a Pac-12 title is on Tres Tinkle's wish list.

"All that stuff is kind of why I came back," he said. "I think this is our best chance with this group of guys to do something like that."

Tinkle averaged 20.8 points, 8.1 rebounds and 3.8 assists last season, when the Beavers finished 18-13 overall and 10-8 in the Pac-12 — their best finish in the league since 1989-90. Oregon State fell to Colorado in the quarterfinals of the Pac-12 tournament to cap the season.

The younger Tinkle has moved beyond thinking he has to "prove it up" because he's the coach's kid, his dad said.

"The way he's approached his teammates and the way he's approached his leadership has shown great maturity," Wayne Tinkle said.

The Tinkles aren't the only family in the Oregon State program. Ethan Thompson, the son of assistant Stephen Thompson, is a junior this season. Older brother Stevie graduated last year.

Like Tres Tinkle, the younger

Thompson also considered the draft.

"It's hard when you've got guys like, 'OK, now I'm going to test the waters,' and you worry about what that does to your locker room. But I thought both Ethan and Tres showed great maturity in that they still worked with their teams, when we met to work out, and then they did what they had to do on the side to prepare for that experience," Coach Tinkle said.

Tinkle and Thompson are joined on the roster by senior Kaylor Kelley. Four freshmen and three junior college transfers are newcomers to the

team. Among them is 7-foot-1 post Roman Silva out of San Bernardino College.

The Beavers were picked to finish seventh in the league in the Pac-12 preseason media poll. Rival Oregon was picked to finish first.

THE LAST DANCE

Tres Tinkle didn't play as a freshman when the Beavers last made the NCAA Tournament in 2016 because of a foot injury. The Beavers fell to VCU 75-67 in the opening round. Gary Payton II was a senior that year.

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