



Monday, May 12, 2003

OU wins Mid-Con title, qualifies for NCAAs

The **Golden Grizzlies** repeated history on the final day of the 2003 Mid-Continent Conference Softball Tournament, winning three times - including twice against previously unbeaten UMKC - to win their second straight championship title.

The OU team, which did the same thing during the 2002 Mid-Con Tournament, qualified for the second year in a row for the NCAA Division I Tournament.

The NCAA Tournament features, for the first time, 64 teams seeded into eight regionals of eight teams each. The regionals are double-elimination and will be played on campus sites May 15-18. The winner of each regional advances to the Women's College World Series, an eight-team, double-elimination tournament to be held May 22-26 at ASA Don E. Porter Hall of Fame Stadium in Oklahoma City.

Oakland (33-23), seeded No. 7 in Region 7, will face defending national champion California (41-18), the No. 2 seed in the region, in the first game of the tournament on Thursday, May 15, at 5:30 p.m. at Alumni Field in Ann Arbor. The six other teams in the Ann Arbor regional include No. 1 DePaul (46-5-1), No. 3 Michigan (40-14), No. 4 Notre Dame (36-15), No. 5 Missouri (29-18), No. 6 Western Michigan (30-22) and No. 8 Wright State (15-35).

If OU wins its first game against California, the **Golden Grizzlies** will play the winner of the Michigan/Western Michigan game on Friday, May 16, at 3 p.m. If Oakland is defeated by California, the Golden Grizzlies will play the loser of the Michigan/Western Michigan game on Friday, May 16, at 10 a.m.

Oakland repeated as the Mid-Con Tournament champion after winning its third game in as many tries on the final day of the competition, which was held in Macomb, Ill. Oakland topped fourth-seeded UMKC by a 2-1 score for the second straight game to earn the title.

OU's Ericka Burns (Clinton, Ontario) was chosen as Mid-Con Tournament MVP for the second straight year. Burns, a senior, batted .692 (9-13) with six runs scored and six RBIs. She collected two doubles, two triples and a home run.

Burns, a third baseman, has been tabbed one of the top players in Mid-Con history and at Oakland during her four-year career. She was named the 2003 Mid-Continent Conference Softball Player of the Year.

Burns led the Mid-Con in batting with a .412 average during the regular season and also led the league in slugging percentage (.622) and on-base percentage(.496). Despite missing a couple of weeks in the middle of the season, she had four home runs and drove in 17 runs while scoring 21 times.

Burns repeated as the first-team third baseman and became the fourth Mid-Con softball player to be named to the first-team all-conference squad four times. She was a first team shortstop in 2000 and was named to the squad as an outfielder in 2001.

A general management major with a 3.2 GPA, Burns recently was named to the Second Team 2003 Verizon Academic All-District IV Softball Division Team.

Joining Burns on the Mid-Con All-Tournament Team were teammates senior Julie Anderson, sophomore Nicole Marzano, senior Megan Piar and sophomore Christina Schulte.

Southpaw pitcher Marzano (McHenry, Ill.) also was cited as the Mid-Con Pitcher of the Year. Marzano won seven out of her last nine decisions during the regular season on her way to a 9-4 record. A repeat first-team honoree, Marzano's 1.54 ERA is at the top in the league, as is her 7.76 strikeouts-per-seven innings (she fanned 116 in 104.2 innings). She limited opponents to a .197 batting average (second in the Mid-Con), threw two complete-game shutouts and combined on three others.

Marzano paced an Oakland staff that led the league in a host of pitching categories, including team ERA (1.91), opponent batting average (.216) and strikeouts (299). On April 22, she fired a no-hitter against Bowling Green, her first of the season and second of her career.

OU coach Mike Tomlinson, who is coaching the Golden Grizzlies in his first season, and Southern Utah's Laurel Simmons

shared Mid-Con Coach of the Year accolades.

This year's OU team also has established a school record for wins with 33.

Oakland made its first trip to the NCAA Division I Softball Tournament last season, winning one of three games at the Michigan Regional. The Golden Grizzlies fell to the University of Washington in the opening game by a score of 8-0 then rallied back against Canisius, earning their first win ever in the NCAA championships by a 3-1 margin. Oakland then finished the 2002 season with a 2-1 loss to Central Michigan.

For more information on OU's softball team, including a team roster, archived stories and records, visit the [OU Athletics Web site](#).

SUMMARY

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