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Bluejays vs. Ducks? It's a possibility

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Oregon coach Dana Altman could face a rematch against his old team in the CBI, though the Ducks and Creighton likely wouldn't face off until the later rounds of the tournament.

No college basketball player or fan starts the season dreaming of playing in the College Basketball Invitational at the end of it.

But how about this for a possible dream CBI matchup for Creighton fans: the Bluejays vs. Dana Altman's Oregon team.

At this point, Creighton is still weighing its options of playing in the CBI or the CollegeInsider.com Tournament. Athletic Director Bruce Rasmussen said Saturday that no final decision had been made, and one might not be until things get sorted out Sunday with the selection of the fields for the NCAA and National Invitation Tournaments.

Oregon dropped into CBI mix Friday with its 69-51 loss to Washington in the Pac-10 tournament semifinals. The loss ended the Ducks' bid to play their way into the NCAA tournament and left them 16-17 in their first season under Altman, who spent the previous 16 as CU's head coach.

Afterward, Altman told the Portland Oregonian that he would talk with his players and Oregon Athletic Director Rob Mullens about possibly extending the Ducks' season.

"I really haven't thought about it — I'm serious about that," Altman said. "I just wanted to try to win this tournament and surprise everybody."

The Oregonian reported that Mullens has, on several occasions, said that he would be in favor of playing in the CBI. The newspaper also reported the players appear willing.

"I wouldn't mind," Oregon senior Joevan Catron said. "I'd love to keep my college career going. If we do get selected for that, I'm all for."

Several teammates echoed Catron's comments.

It would be unlikely that Oregon and Creighton would meet in the early rounds of the tournament, given that each play in arenas and in front of fan bases capable of producing the kind of revenue that is attractive to tournament organizers.

But how about meeting up in the CBI's best-of-three finals? Such a matchup might not catch the national fancy, but it certainly could liven things up around these parts.

Oregon is eligible to play in the CBI because the tournament does invite teams with losing records. In fact, Oregon State had a 13-17 record when it participated in the 2009 CBI and won five of six games en route to claiming the title to finish 18-18.

Three other teams with losing records have played in the event.

Creighton will take a 19-14 record into the postseason. The Bluejays have been practicing since Wednesday.

They'll gather Sunday to watch the NCAA tournament selection show and then practice. It's probably likely that a few "what-ifs" will run through the

players' minds as they watch the selection show.

Creighton's bid to claim an NCAA tournament berth ended with a 60-50 loss to Missouri State in the Valley tournament semifinals.

The Bears went on to lose the championship game to Indiana State, which grabbed the league's automatic berth.

The tournament could have had a decidedly different feel had eighth-seeded Southern Illinois knocked off Missouri State in the quarterfinals. The Salukis led by nine points with 2:49 to play but the Bears scored the last 11 points to pull out a 58-56 win.

"I felt going in that any of five or six teams could win it," Creighton coach Greg McDermott said. "The two teams in the championship were seconds away from not ever getting to see Saturday."

It might be human nature to speculate how things might have turned out had Missouri State and Indiana State not been fortunate enough to get past their first-round games, but the Bluejays say it serves no purpose at this point.

"It's natural for those ideas to climb into your head," CU guard Jahenns Manigat said. "It could have been a totally different tournament.

"But in any tournament, your mind-set has to be that you can only control what you do."

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