

volleyball

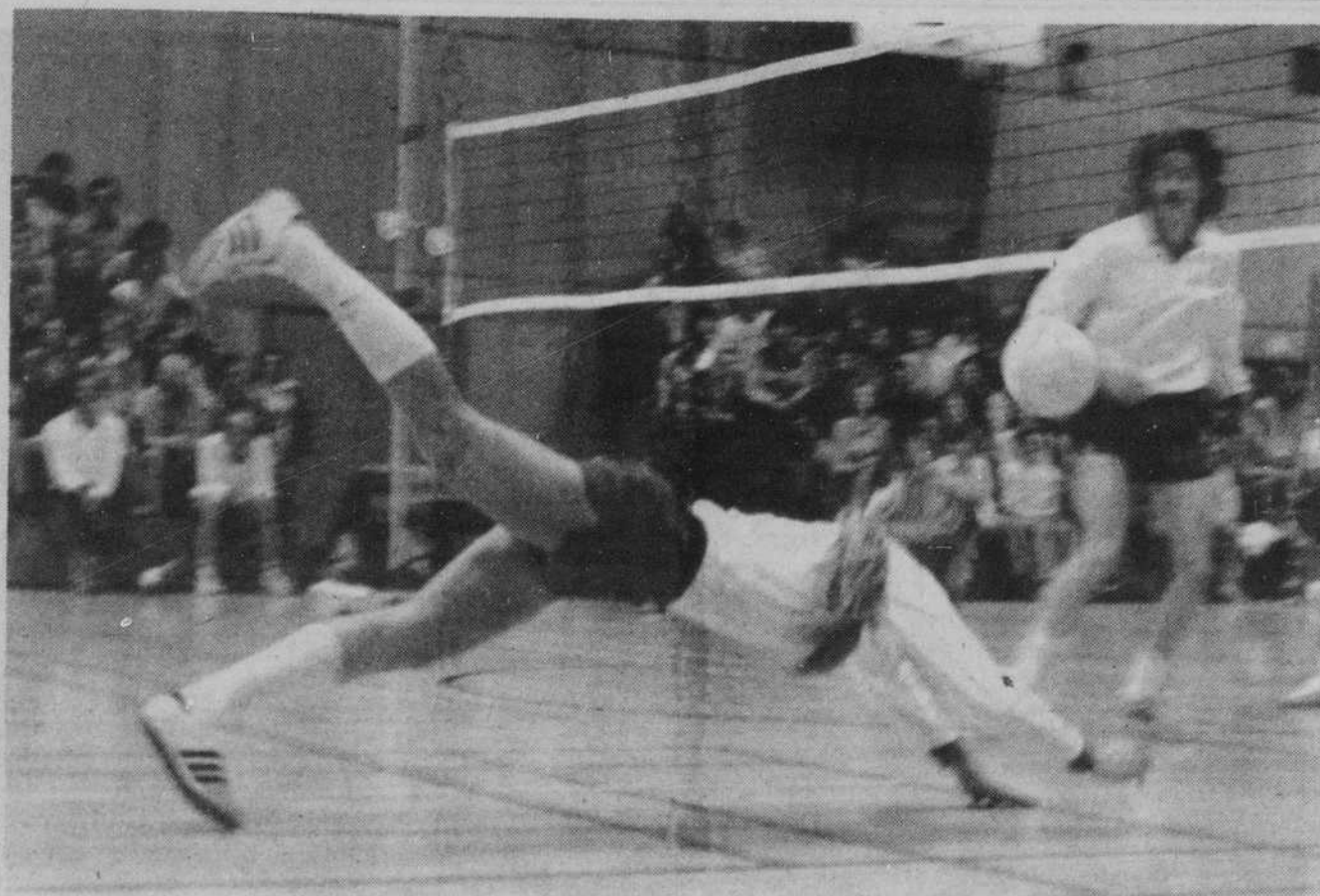


Photo courtesy Club Sports

Just two years ago Jan Kaestner had only a passing interest in volleyball. It was enough to coax him to sign up for the University men's volleyball team and he now plays "whenever I can" — usually 25-30 hours a week.

Kaestner takes the dive: Team's 'worst' now No. 1

By KEVIN HACKETT
of the Emerald

Two years ago, Jan Kaestner's passing interest in volleyball prompted him to try out for the University's men's volleyball team.

Up to that point, Kaestner's volleyball experience had been confined to "jungle ball" pickup games in high school and college. He admits that he didn't exactly dazzle the team with his talent.

"There were 16 guys out for the team then, and I was the worst guy on the team. They were playing a style of ball I had never seen before," Kaestner remembers.

Kaestner decided to familiarize himself with the competitive style the University team was playing. He realized he needed work on fundamentals, as well as more experience. He started playing volleyball whenever and wherever he could.

He enrolled in physical education volleyball classes and sat in on others in order to play when an extra player was needed. He played on intramural teams and continued to play jungle ball. Kaestner found that the more he played the game, the more he enjoyed it. He estimates that he was soon playing 20 to 30 hours a week.

Today the worst player on the team of two years ago is quite the opposite. Kaestner has not only

developed into one of the best players on the University team, but he is also serving as player-coach. In addition, he plays for the Emerald Volleyball Club and still gets in on recreational games at Gerlinger Annex.

Kaestner's interest in volleyball parallels the growing interest and organization among Northwest colleges and universities in the game. This year the Oregon team, which is sponsored by Club Sports, joined Oregon State, Washington, Washington State,

Western Washington and Seattle Pacific to form a Northwest Collegiate Volleyball League.

Last Saturday, league-leading Washington State dumped Oregon in three straight sets, putting the Duck's season record at 4-3. Oregon currently holds down third place in the league. Kaestner said the top four teams in the league will play off for the championship at the season's end in April.

Volleyball initially became popular as a beach sport. It soon caught on as a competitive game as well as being recreational. Logically, the best players in the United States have consistently come out of areas with the environmental conditions most conducive to the game, i.e. Southern California and Hawaii.

This is not to imply that Oregon is a vast volleyball wasteland.

Kaestner said most of the better male players in the state develop

on college teams and then move on to play on club teams. He said the Emerald Club and the YMCA have good local club teams. The Multnomah Athletic Club in Portland annually has one of the best club teams in the nation. Last year, Multnomah finished fourth in the United States Volleyball Association national championships.

Kaestner enjoys coaching but feels that the added burden has detracted from his own game.

"Being a player coach hurts my game personally, because I'm not really able to concentrate on what I'm doing."

Like most sports, the key to winning volleyball is exploiting an opponent's weaknesses. Kaestner said that while playing, he has to be conscious of picking out the other team's strong points and weak points, and then try to make the appropriate adjustments in strategy or player positioning in order to gain an advantage.

This weekend Oregon faces what will probably be its stiffest competition of the year in Mac Court. Friday night at 7:30, Oregon will try to gain some revenge on Washington State. Kaestner said WSU is essentially a one-man team, centering its hopes around 5'10" Guy Enriquez. Kaestner uses one word — amazing — to describe the Hawaiian who possesses a 40 inch vertical jump. On Saturday at 3:30 p.m. Oregon will take on Humboldt State from Northern California.



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