

softball



Photos Courtesy WIA

Oregon will be counting on the play of standouts Vicki Lesh (above) and Shawna Baxter in their quest to improve on last year's 12-9 record. Lesh had a brilliant .975 fielding average at her third base spot a year ago. Baxter will be the workhorse for Becky Sisley's squad, as has been the case the last two years. Baxter had an 11-6 record last year, while giving up only 1.69 earned runs per ballgame.



Experience key factor for softball team

By MIKE GRADY
Of the Emerald

With softball fields looking more like flooded rice paddies this time of year and with three potential starters playing on the women's basketball team, Coach Becky Sisley isn't too sure right now of how her softball squad will size up this season.

"Right now we haven't worked on anything with outfield and infield combinations," said Sisley, who led Oregon to a 12-9 record last year. "What we've got to do is

get everyone together, get out on a field and really concentrate on game knowledge."

And even though seven people return from a 1977 team that showed promising potential, Sisley is still concerned as to how well the younger and less experienced players will blend in.

"We're really a lot less experienced this year than last," she said. "We have quite a few new people who have the potential, but they haven't had that much softball experience."

Pointing to departures of out-

fielder Jenny Hector and infielder Lynne Conroy, Sisley stated that a key for the Ducks will be how well they can fill those two vacancies.

As Oregon's second baseman last season, Conroy led the team with a .369 batting average, scored 23 runs and struck out only twice in 84 trips to the plate. In her absence Allyson Smith will move from first base to second. Smith hit .354 a year ago and was named the Northwest Women's Fast Pitch League's "rookie of the year" while playing second base for Eugene's summer team.

Sisley sees first base as the biggest question mark, but lists three players who will have a shot at it. Becky Paschke is one of those and the only one who can boast of previous varsity experience. Paschke, who won't be out until the basketball team is finished with its play-offs, collected eight hits in 18 plate appearances last year after being brought up from the junior varsity near the end of the season.

Molly Cardwell and Helaine Jesse are the two others Sisley indicated will see action at first base. Cardwell is a freshman and Jesse played on the JV's last year.

The left side of the infield appears to be the Duck's strongest area. Vicki Lesh returns to third base after recording an impressive .975 fielding average at that spot a year ago. Also returning after a fine defensive year is shortstop Kim Knox. Knox hit .304 last season while playing in every game, either at shortstop or pitching.

Since Lesh and Knox will also spend some time on the mound, Sisley indicated that freshman Jody Salter could be seeing back-up action at both of their respective positions.

With the departure of Hector, the Ducks have only one returning outfield starter in Hanna Munson. Munson led the team in doubles (4) and ended with a .283 batting average last year.

To fill in the remaining outfield slots, Sisley can choose from Julie Cushing, Mary Harada and Shawna Baxter.

Baxter was the Duck's top pitcher from a year ago with an 11-6 record and will once again be tabbed by Sisley to be the number one thrower. Striking out 65 batters in 99 innings of work during her sophomore season, Baxter

finished with a 1.69 earned run average last season.

Once basketball is over Sally Bickie will return as last year's starting catcher. Sisley isn't just waiting around though, giving Salter, Harada and Karen Duckett the chance to show themselves behind the plate until Bickie gets back.

"Catching should be no problem," Sisley said. "With Harada, Duckett and Salter, we've got three pretty eager people behind Sally."

The Ducks won't open their season until the end of spring vacation, but with a trip to California consisting of three doubleheaders in four days, they'll soon find themselves quite busy.

"A lot of confusion is going to be worked out on the spring trip," said Sisley about the four-day swing which starts March 25th at Sacramento against Utah State.

"So much of what I can't say right now has got to do with game situations. Our objective on the trip will be to give a lot of game play to everybody. We'll take 14 or 15 people and see how everyone reacts under a pressure situation."

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