

Number One

In his fourth year at Oregon, Tom Greider finally aces the school career wins record

Imagine being the number one player on the Oregon men's tennis team, the current record holder for the most wins in a career (49) and the current challenger for the record for most wins in a season (17). Just about anyone would be happy with those records and accomplishments.

Not senior Tom Greider. Greider has something else he wants to accomplish. Namely, pitching for the Oregon baseball team. A tennis star turning to the mound? Ludicrous, maybe, but Greider isn't one to back down from a challenge. His tennis career serves as a sterling example.

When Greider hung his baseball glove up seven years ago in junior high school to pursue tennis, a college career wasn't one of his dreams. "I was a much better baseball player than I was a tennis player," he remembers. "I loved tennis so much that I decided to work my tail off and become as good at it as I was in baseball."

Greider's early "work" came in the form of playing countless hours against his father. "My

dad said serving in tennis is just like throwing a baseball, and he was right," says Greider. "At first he always won, but after a lot of practice I turned the tables."

By the time Greider reached his senior year at Cobberley high school in Palo Alto, Calif., his tennis game was going strong. "I was 12 and 5 my senior year and the competition was pretty stiff," he says.

During his senior year Greider visited the University campus and a love affair began. "After seeing the campus and meeting the people here, I knew I wanted to be a Duck."

While here Greider purchased a Duck tennis hat that his Cobberley coach would not let him wear. "I brought the hat down with me and began using it in my matches," he says. "The coach for some reason told me I couldn't wear it." Greider, "infested with the Duck spirit," went out and bought a different hat. This one was a Fighting Duck baseball cap. "I didn't buy the hat to be cocky," Greider says. "I figured the coach just felt that the other one got in the



Tom Greider, at left, is quick to attribute much of his success in tennis to coach Buz Summers.

way of my game. Since he didn't make me take the new one off I guess I was right."

One of the reasons Greider claims to wear the hat is because it keeps the sun out of his eyes. Except when you watch one of his matches, the first thing you notice is that his hat is planted squarely on his head with the bill pointed backwards. "I guess the main reason I wear the hat is because I love the U of O Athletic department," says Greider. "I want to feel like I have a part of them out there with me when I play."

When Greider and his hat joined the mens' tennis team in their freshman year, he was immediately impressed by the talent. Recalls Greider, "Here I was with my stupid little hat playing against guys like former career wins record holder Mike Jung. I had a lot of work to do."

As a freshman Greider ate, drank, and slept tennis. "I played tennis three or four times a day my first year," he says. "At the time, that was all I was here for."

Coach Buz Summers has been a big influence on Greider's life, and Greider does not hesitate to give credit where it is due. "Coach Summers has been a coach, instructor, and friend to me since my freshman year," he says. "He is just like on of the guys and that makes things easier on everyone."

Now that Greider is a senior, he finds the pressure of the game and the weight of his records quite demanding. "I could have got the record for most season wins last year but I choked away my last four matches," he says.

"Every time I get near a record my play deteriorates." The pressure almost did Greider in earlier in the season. "I had lost the competitive instinct," he says. "Without that competitive killer instinct a tennis player cannot win consistently."

Greider's killer instinct returned with the not too often seen Oregon sun. "I was really contemplating quitting, but when the sun came out my spirits lifted."

Greider's tennis game is not the only thing that has taken shape since his freshman year. He also has some very concrete career goals in mind. "I decided to major in Telecommunication and I think it's great. I would love to be able to do the color portion of a tennis broadcast some day."

However, Greider does not limit himself to sports announc-

ing. "I am currently interning at KSND and KASH," he says. "It's great experience and I really enjoy it."

If the Telecommunication field does not lead him down a rewarding path, Greider still feels he has the option of coaching tennis. "I got a job offer to work with the juniors program at one of the tennis clubs," he says. "If the chance came up I would love to coach at the high school level."

As for professional tennis, Greider is realistic. "I am not nearly good enough to turn pro," he says. "I would just as soon stay at the coaching level after college."

Greider realizes that the tennis season will not last forever, but he is unwilling to give up on the Oregon Athletic Department. "I have slept outside two nights in a row to get tickets for the UCLA versus Oregon basketball game," he says. "I'm a Duck through and through and I am not ready to break away from the fantastic athletic program here."

One night, just before bed, the idea of pitching for the Ducks came to Greider and has haunted him ever since. "I'm definitely serious about a baseball career next year," he emphasizes. "You are allowed four years of eligibility in one sport plus one year in another,

and I am going to take advantage of that.

"I pitched pretty well up to my sophomore year in high school and then switched to tennis," he says. "I think with a lot of hard work I can get my form back and contribute to the team."

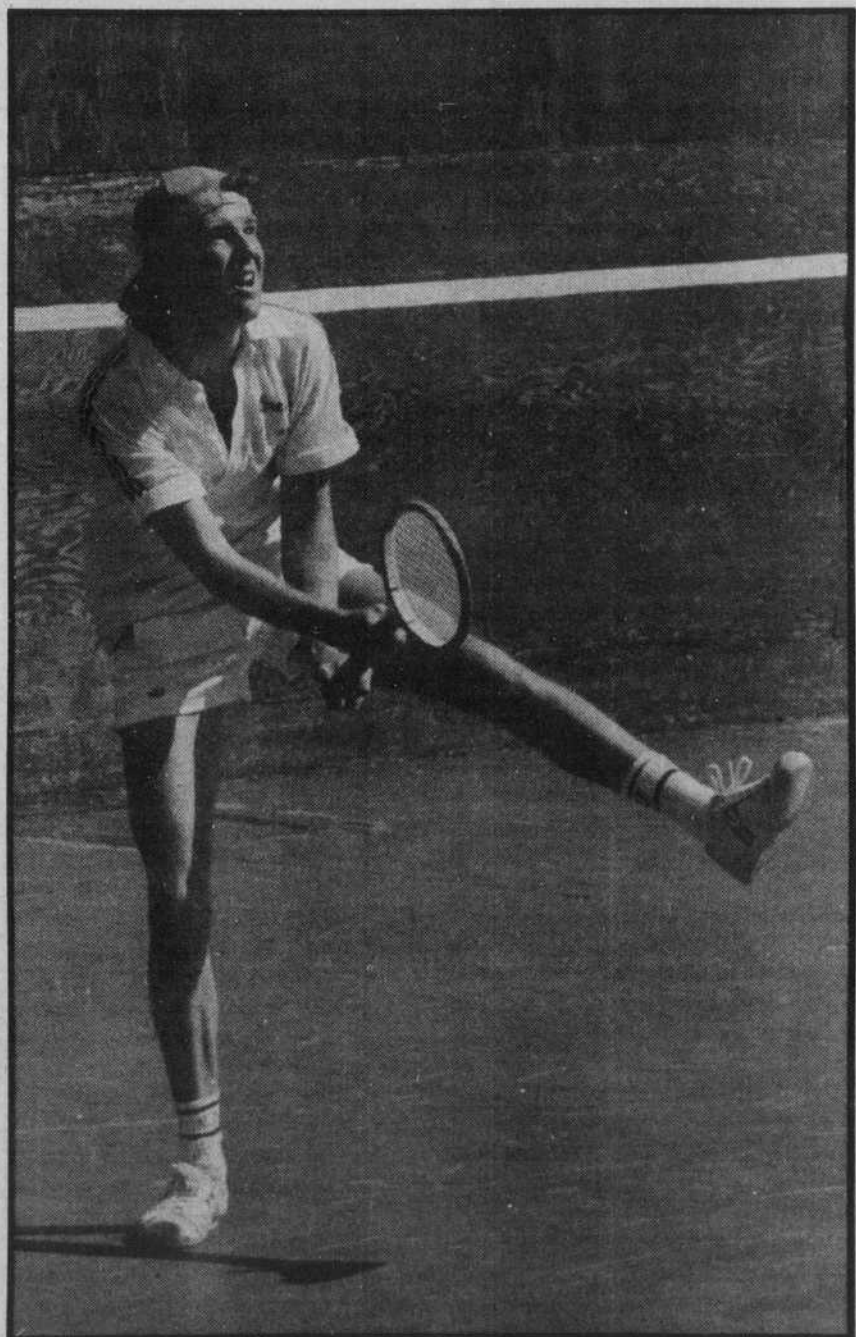
Although Greider is confident, he is careful not to be too optimistic. "I am not saying I can go out there and compete at those guys' level," he says. "After the season I am going to start training and who knows, maybe a southpaw from Palo Alto can work his way in."

Greider feels his strength lies in three areas: "My off-speed pitches have good control, I do not like to lose, and I'll have my own catcher up here next year." Greider's "own catcher" is an old friend of his who is transferring here from a junior college. "We have gone to school together for a long time and he is a good one," he says. "He knows the way I throw and I know the way he catches — we make a great team."

Greider will be finished with tennis in mid-May. "My last match for Oregon will be a sad event," he says. "It will be my last hurrah."

Or will it? Only baseball coach Mel Krause knows for sure.

Story by Richard Hanlin
Photos by Steve Dykes



His 49 career wins haven't all come easily for Oregon senior Tom Greider. He is currently closing in on the Oregon season win record.

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