



tamara swenson double play

Beginning in late November, one sport begins to grab attention as America's favorite — basketball.

Almost any kid, male or female, grew up with football in the fall, basketball in the winter and baseball in the spring and summer.

But unlike football and baseball, basketball was everyone's sport. Any kid of any sex or age could pick up a game at the local playground if they wanted to.

In many ways, my introduction to the sport was different.

My first memories, besides a visit to the dentist at age three, are of basketball games. My father was then a basketball coach.

Back then, all the attention was focused on the boy's teams. I didn't attend a women's basketball game until after Title IX had worked its way into athletic jargon and my high school began supporting a women's team.

That was in 1973.

Less than 10 years later, women's basketball has emerged from power struggles

and budget woes as a leader in women's athletics. Girls that began playing competitive ball in junior high are now in college.

And the caliber of play reflects the training and dedication of the athlete.

"We're reaping the benefits now," says Oregon women's basketball coach Elwin Heiny.

Benefits stretch from national playoffs to fans waiting for an autograph outside the locker-room to full-ride scholarships.

More impressively, perhaps, is the number of fans women's basketball has begun to attract.

No longer are the games stuck in small gyms with limited spectator seating.

The days of 15 fans in Gerlinger Hall and popsicles after the game are gone, says Heiny.

Along with equal funding came equal facilities.

And with equal facilities came the potential at Oregon to attract 10,000 fans. The biggest crowd for a women's game to date has been 6,000 fans watching the Duck women defeat the Korean National Team, 68-67, in McArthur Court.

The Duck women have fought their way from the bottom to within reach of the top in the last four years.

However, while Mac Court will be packed for a men's game against almost anyone, the women's team continues to draw only 3,000 for a match against the best opponents.

Oregon's 12th-ranked women's basketball team deserves more.

Next Wednesday, the Ducks are likely to host a first-round national playoff game. Although the contest will be sandwiched between the high school AA playoffs and in the middle of finals week, there should be a crowd — a large crowd.

After all, if the NCAA playoffs were to be held in Eugene, the Pit would be packed.

Clark claims MVP award

Senior center Mike Clark won two honors, including most valuable player, at the Oregon basketball awards banquet Monday night.

Clark, who led the Ducks in both scoring and rebounding (15.5 and 9.0), also received the Carl Greve scholar-athlete award.

Oregon's other graduating senior, Felton Sealey, was presented the John Warren Award for being chosen the team's most inspirational player.

The 1980-81 squad had the best field goal percentage in school history (50.3), led by freshman David Brantley's school-record 59.2 percentage.

Junior John Grieg's .882 mark in free throw efficiency was also a school record. Grieg has sank his last 35 free throws — only two behind the Pac-10 record set by USC's John Block in 1966.

Coach Jim Haney, after expressing optimism for next year's season, said, "My one regret is that Michael and Felton — who have endured so much heartache, shown so much care — cannot reap the rewards of Oregon basketball."

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