

Optimism remains for lady gymnasts

By Doug Levy
Of the Emerald

If you are the type of person who can see a bright spot under every dark cloud, and vice-versa, then you will love this year's version of Oregon women's gymnastics.

For the eternal optimists, there is a new coach — 31-year-old Gary Vanderhoef. Vanderhoef was a gymnast himself at Brigham Young University, and he comes to Oregon after coaching stints at Sonoma (Calif.) State University, Western Oregon State College, and Bend High School. He also owned and operated a gymnastics school while in Bend. "I was ready for a change and this (coaching position) opened up," says Vanderhoef, who adds that his main goal is to keep Oregon competitive within their region.

Unfortunately, Vanderhoef may not stay at Oregon. He is currently under a one-year contract. His salary is on a half-time rate, yet Vanderhoef has consistently been working 60 hours a week with the team and on the recruiting trail.

"A long stay — I'd love that, but I can't really

speculate on the future," says the first-year coach. "I'm just coaching day by day."

On the bright side, the Ducks have talented young freshmen to carry the team in the future. There is Jeri Frazer, who comes to Oregon from the National Academy of Artistic Gymnastics in Eugene, and Julie Tennenhouse, a prep All-American from Salem, along with a promising walk-on in Laura Demmons, who hails from Missoula, Montana. Early-season injuries to Jeannette Stewart have given Frazer and Tennenhouse a chance to contribute right away.

However, freshman talent in the future for Oregon could be in the form of slim and none. The gymnastics team is operating on a meager budget that does not include any scholarships for next year.

Vanderhoef has already had to deny the requests of several promising high school performers who have inquired about scholarships at Oregon.

"It's tough to go out and recruit," admits Vanderhoef. "Other coaches in the region know the situation — it's a couple of blows against me." Vanderhoef is hoping to sell the program on pride and integrity within the team and the community.

Oregon does have plenty of good gymnasts on hand to make the 1981-82 season a successful one. The list starts with Sara Gustafson, a senior from Portland, who is a two-time AIAW qualifier, a fifth-place finisher in the 1980 Western Hemisphere all-around, a school record holder in the floor exercise (9.40) and bars (9.30) and is a two-time state prep AA champion.

Backing Gustafson is Stewart, a junior from Eugene, who competed for the National Academy of Artistic Gymnastics and finished first in the 1978 state prep all-around competition. The Ducks also have three sophomore all-arounders: two-time prep All-American Lynn Fenton, Maureen Nolan, who notched scores of 34.35 in all-around and 9.25 on bars last year before mid-season knee surgery, and Holly Holmes, a top bars performer who also placed sixth in the vault in Region 9 last year.

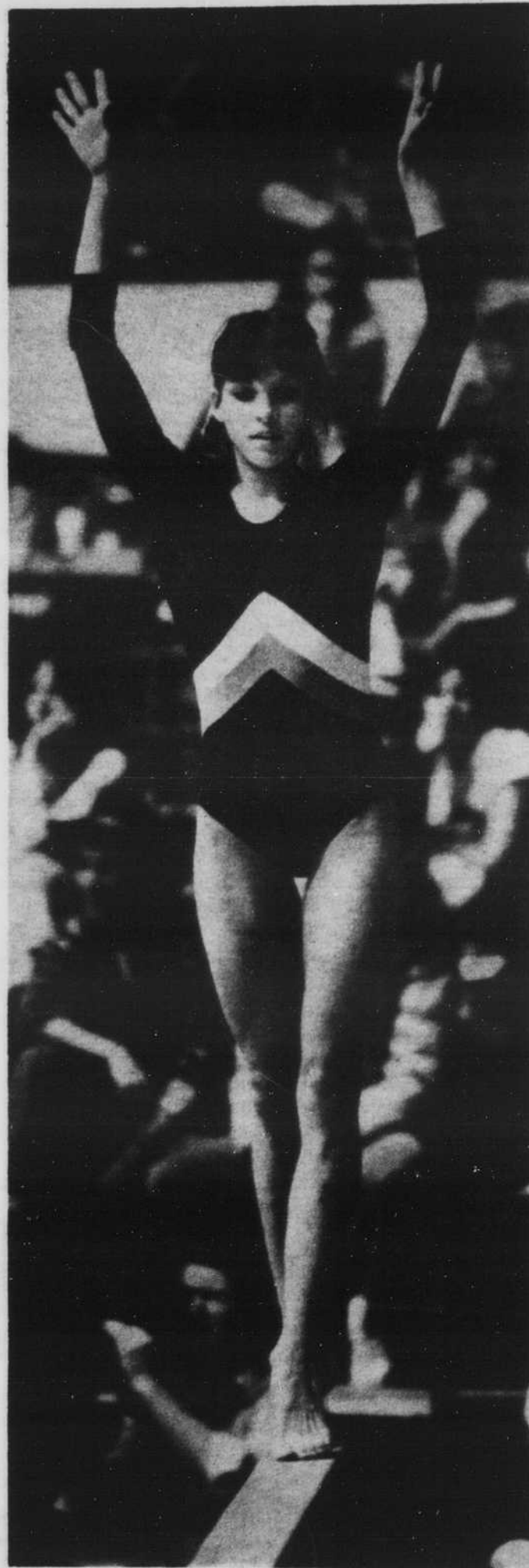
The problem for the Ducks is that the rest of the region is loaded. Utah, a part of the Western Region due to the NCAA take-over of women's athletics, was last year's AIAW champ. Oregon State had a dual-meet win against Utah last year on the way to a third-place AIAW finish; they are ranked second this year, and currently own the nation's best dual meet score. Also predicted to be tough is the University of Washington, a team Vanderhoef believes is really coming on.

The Huskies feature Suzy Sun, who the Ducks saw quite a bit of in last weekend's Washington Open. Sun took first on the floor and won the all-around competition as the Huskies captured the nine-team meet. Oregon took third in the meet.

So far, things have gone about as expected for Oregon this year. The Ducks have defeated Seattle Pacific in dual-meet action and Seattle Pacific and Montana State in a three-way competition. There has also been the loss to a powerful OSU squad and the third-place showing in the Washington Open.

The third-place finish, however, was by no means disappointing — the lady flyers scored 132.05 points, their highest total of the season, had more competition finalists than any other team, and got a big boost from Nolan, who hit a 9.3 on the bars.

Certainly, the far future could be a dark cloud for Oregon women's gymnastics. With a coach on a half-time salary, a meager budget and the absence of scholarships, a promising program might cave in. But with only one senior on the team, and plenty of replacements ready, the Ducks should shine this year, and for a few years to come.



Junior Jeanette Stewart (above) and senior Sara Gustafson will provide much of the spark for the women's gymnastics team this year.

— sportfolio —

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Bobby Jones scored six of his 21 points in the final 2:24 to rally the Philadelphia 76ers to a 115-110 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers Wednesday night in a National Basketball Association game.

With the victory, the 76ers snapped a three-game losing streak, and avoided losing four straight for the first time since 1974.

Julius Erving led the 76ers with 27 points. Rookie Franklin Edwards contributed 16, all in the second period, when Philadelphia overcame a 13-point deficit to lead by 60-54 at halftime.

Portland led 108-105 with 2:58 on the clock when Jones went to work. He sandwiched two field goals around a pair of free throws by Verhoeven to leave the Sixers trailing 110-109 with 2:01 left.

Jones missed a free throw that would have tied the game, but atoned with a field goal at 1:27 to send Philadelphia ahead, 111-110.

Kevin Ransey led Portland with 26, but Billy Ray Bates scored 10 of his 14 points in the final period to key the Trail Blazers' comeback.

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — National Football League officials are keeping a watchful eye on a clattering weather service printer in their makeshift Super Bowl office.

Record low temperatures are greeting the army of fans descending on this city for the Super Bowl XVI match between the Cincinnati Bengals and the San Francisco 49ers on Sunday.

But snow is what the NFL really fears as it stages its first Super Bowl in the snow belt.

Despite all the preparations in the world, a blizzard could keep fans away from the sold-out 80,000-seat Pontiac Silverdome in snow-prone southeastern Michigan.

"If we have a blizzard, everybody's going to have a big problem," said Paul Van Roekel, Oakland County highway engineer.

The National Weather Service is predicting a 20 percent chance of snow Sunday, with partly cloudy skies and afternoon temperatures between 17 and 22 degrees.

The Oregon table tennis club ripped Northwest powerhouse Portland Community College 8-5 and also defeated Portland State 9-3 last weekend in Corvallis. It was the first time in five years that Oregon had beaten PCC.

Oregon takes on both schools and Oregon State Friday, Feb. 20 at 10 a.m. in 352 Gerlinger Annex. Oregon must defeat all three schools to come away with the trophy for the year.

A number of Oregon track and field athletes will be competing this weekend. Freshman Kathy Hayes and sophomore Ranza Clark (competing unattached winter term) will run in the Edmonton Journal Games in Alberta on Saturday, Jan. 24. Hayes will run the 3,000; Clark, the 800.

The Oregon Track Club will hold their annual meeting Sunday, January 24, 6 p.m. at the Valley River Inn East and Middle Willamette Room. The program will include a panel discussion of the state of track and field in the U.S. Bill Dellinger, Tom Heinonen and Peter Thompson will also speak. Nike will show a video production of the 1980 Olympic Trials. The Oregon Track club Board of Directors will be elected as well.

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