



Alison Lang

cordingly."

Rutherford plans to play a zone defense against Oregon, to counter the Ducks height advantage. Missouri starts only two players who top out at six feet, Ferret and Jonie Davis (6-0). But despite their lack of size, they play a deliberate offense that works the ball inside.

Oregon hopes to use its own size to overpower the Tigers inside.

"They have a weakness defending teams inside and we hope to take advantage of that," said Bland. "They also seem to be susceptible to pressure, so we will probably try to apply that as much as possible."

The Ducks appear to be peaking at just the right time after their wins over the University of Montana and Montana State last week, and in beating the world-ranked Republic of Korea two weeks ago.

"We have been playing increasingly better each time out.

Every player has shown improved performances so we feel ready for the playoffs," Bland said.

"This team is experienced in the playoffs, so it isn't going to be something new. The players have each matured a lot this season. They know the roles they are supposed to play and the limits they can reach. They are very confident within their roles, and it shows.

"I think the best thing about this team is their ability to come back. It really shows that they are confident in their play, because no matter how far they fall behind, they always comeback. That will really help them in the NCAA's because with that kind of attitude, they don't feel that anyone can beat them."

Oregon will be further helped by the rehabilitation of Chris

Metzger, a starter earlier this season who has been out with a foot injury.

"With Chris healthy it really adds a lot to our team. She is strong on the boards and that really helps. Especially against a team like Missouri where we will be trying to take advantage of that," said Bland.

Saturday night will see Bev Smith's last game in Eugene, as the all-American finishes out her performances at Mac Court.

"It's hard for Bev to get up any more for a game, since she plays everyone like it's her last. But I'm sure she'll want to end with a win. She wants to finish strong and keep going on in the tournament," Bland said.

"But first we have to get past Missouri. I'm sure if Bev can play any better than she has in the past, she'll show it Saturday night."

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The Oregon lacrosse team hits the road this weekend, challenging Willamette University on Sunday, March 14 in Salem. The Ducks began their season last weekend, losing both to Willamette and the Portland Lacrosse Club.

The Oregon women's gymnastics team will be shooting for a third-place finish when they travel to Corvallis for the NCAA Western Regionals tonight.

The Ducks, 8-9 overall on the season, are healthy for the meet, and coach Gary Vanderhoef is optimistic about their chances.

"The girls have committed themselves to going all out for this meet. We want to score in the 140's," he said.

In an effort to speed up the meet, the NCAA has paired up the performers from Oregon and Washington and the gymnasts from Oregon State and Utah. So, in essence, the Oregon gymnasts will be competing only against the Huskies, but the overall scores will be computed on a first, second, third and fourth place basis. By pairing up the teams, the NCAA has made the meet a one-day meet instead of the original two-day format.

First place in regionals should be a battle between 1st-ranked Utah and 2nd-ranked OSU, both of whom have been scoring in the high 140's this season. Utah recently scored 149.65 points in a three-way meet with OSU and Oklahoma State, and the Utes boast four 1980 Olympic team members, including Suzy Stednitz, who Vanderhoef labels a classical gymnast.

OSU will be led by all-Americans Mary Ayotte-Law, Laurie Carter (the 1981 AIAW beam champ) and freshman sensation Jayne Weinstein from Eugene, who Vanderhoef predicts will win the NCAA bars title.

Meanwhile, the Ducks will battle with Washington for third place. Vanderhoef concedes that it will take a super effort for Oregon, which averaged 136 points a meet, to defeat the Huskies who averaged 139. "If we hit everything, and that means no falls or mistakes, we can hit 143, but if they hit everything, they can hit 144, so we'll have to have a very good meet," Vanderhoef says.

As usual, senior Sara Gustafson will key Oregon's hopes. Vanderhoef also figures that Maureen Nolan, who scored a 9.3 on bars in the Washington invitational, will have to have another good bar routine, and he is hoping junior Jeannette Stewart will execute some new moves on the vault and bars. Washington will be led by all-arounder Suzy Sun.

Volleyball player Connie Riel, of Woodland Hills, Calif., and high jumper Shari Collins of Chiloquin, have signed letters of intent to attend the University.

Riel, a six-foot setter/hitter, was named to the all-California Interscholastic Federation team her in this, her senior year at Calabasas High School. Collins, a senior at Chiloquin High School, has cleared 6-0 in the high jump. She is only the second Oregon prep to achieve that height. The other Oregonian to clear 6 feet was Sheridan's Joni Huntley, who later went on to set the American Record.

The Oregon athletic department ticket office will be open extra hours Saturday to accommodate fans wishing to attend the Oregon-Missouri women's basketball game that night. The March 13 NCAA first-round game begins at 7:30. All seats are general admission (\$4 for adults, \$2 for students, children and senior citizens). The ticket office will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

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