

Sports

Angry Tigers drop Ducks in dismal NorPac opener

By Doug Levy
Of the Emerald

Arriving in Stockton, Cal., to play the University of Pacific, the Oregon women's volleyball team had two strikes against them.

First, they were about to play the 2nd-ranked team in the nation. Second, they were facing a team that was angry.

"They had just come off two losses, and when the 2nd-ranked team in the nation is coming off two losses — well, they were not going to give an inch," said Oregon coach Chris Voelz.

The Tigers didn't, thrashing the Ducks 15-2, 15-3, 15-5 to run their record in NorPac Conference play to 4-0 and 8-2 overall. Meanwhile, Oregon, who lost Stephanie Tambe to an arm injury in pre-game warmups, fell to 0-1 and 7-5 overall.

"They were a very balanced team, more balanced than I've seen them before," said Voelz.

As for the Ducks, "nobody had a stellar performance."

Statistics bear Voelz out. UOP had 44 kills to Oregon's 24 and made only 9 errors compared to 20 for the Ducks. Also, Oregon had only two ace serves throughout the match. Only Anetta Ensworth and Sue Harbour, who Voelz calls, "our Bev Smith" had plus attacking percentages.

It was a stark contrast to a year ago, when Oregon faced a Pacific team that finished 4th in the nation and took the Tigers to the limit before losing 15-7, 15-6, 7-15, 8-15, 15-11. "Harbour had a great blocking game," recalls Voelz. But this time the Ducks came out flat and were very tentative, the coach said.

However, on paper, Oregon had expected to lose to Pacific. A team they didn't expect to lose to was Fresno State, but the Bulldogs upset the Ducks on Saturday, 15-13, 15-8, 16-14.

"That game was one of the biggest disappointments that we've had so far this season," said Voelz. Oregon had beaten FSU soundly in junior national play over the summer, and "you'd think that if you add older players, the result would be the same," remarked Voelz.

But the Ducks blew an 11-3 first game lead and a 5-3 second game lead. Voelz said Oregon was weak on blocking, serving, serve receiving and hitting.

Needless to say, the upset loss to Fresno put a dent in Voelz' plan to finish in the top four of the conference. "We are the much better team, and I expected to take them in three (games), but darned if they didn't take us in three. That sure threw us off. I had counted Fresno State as a given (win). Now we'll have to beat someone we're not supposed to, and beat the teams we're even with. It puts a lot more pressure on us."

Some critical turnovers and lack of execution dropped the Ducks to 0-2 in league and 7-6 overall, and Oregon has now lost five straight matches as they prepare to host the University of Washington and Washington state this weekend.

The games against UW and WSU should be classic examples of big and slow versus small and quick, according to Voelz. "Washington does not have good passing, and they have a lousy back line, but they

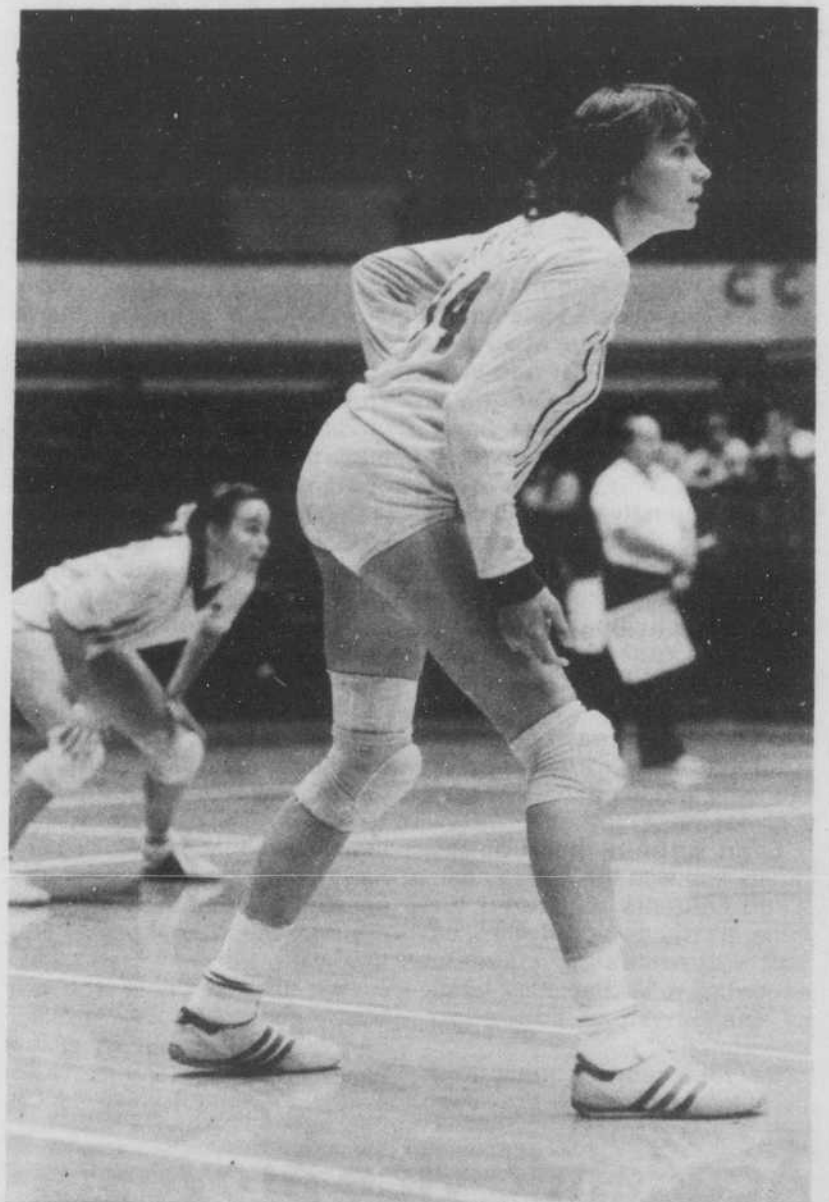


Photo by Dave Kao

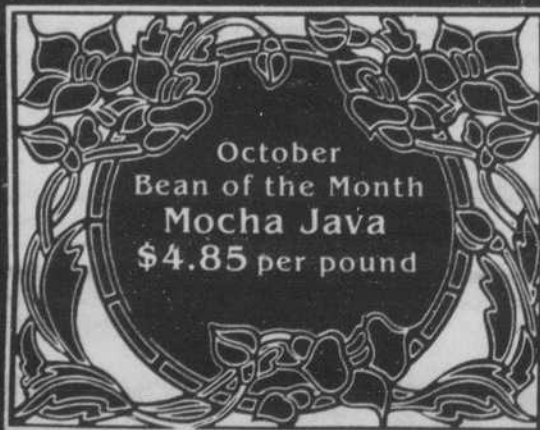
Sue Harbor, who Oregon coach Chris Voelz calls "our Bev Smith" prepares to return a shot against the Chinese National team in action earlier this season.

have an enormous front line and great blocking." WSU, Voelz says, is the same type of team.

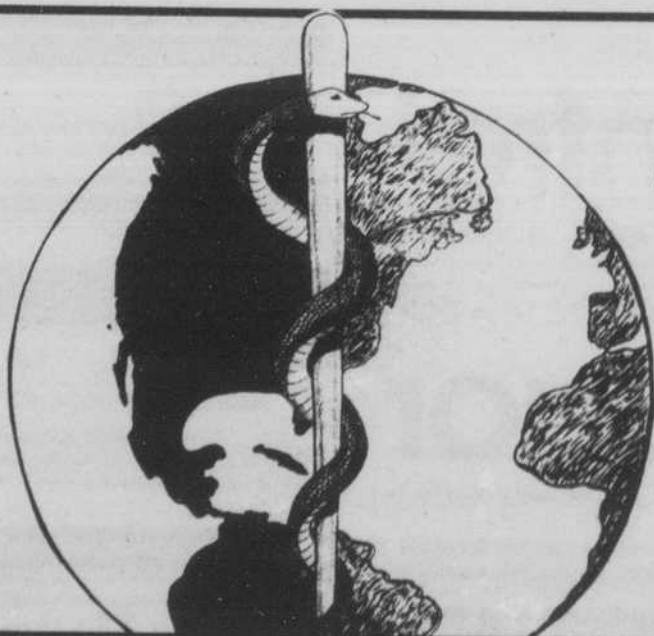
Voelz figures the Ducks should play Washington even or beat the Huskies, something her team has never done. "Washington is always a real emotional threat — we'll have to play great defense to win."

The Cougars should not be a problem for Oregon. They are 0-3 in league and have lost nine straight games to the University of California, San Jose State and Washington. Still, Voelz throws some caution to the wind. "They're all going to be tough now. We have to prove something."

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AL playoffs start today

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Neither the Milwaukee Brewers nor the California Angels have had much experience in playoff situations. But one of them is going to represent the American League in the World Series later this month.

And if statistics can be trusted, there should be a lot of offensive fireworks when the clubs square off in the best-of-five AL Championship Series, which opens Tuesday night (5:25 p.m., PDT) at Anaheim.

The Brewers, who hit .279 as a team, led the major leagues in runs scored with 891 and homers with 216. The Angels, who batted .274, were second in both departments with 814 and 186, respectively.

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