

Women's basketball wants to forget '82

Ducks feel they can win games, dominate Northwest rivals again

By Todd Fletcher
Of the Emerald

After a 15-14 record, two losses to arch-rival Oregon State University, and disappointing season-ending losses to University of California and Washington, Oregon women's basketball coach Elwin Heiny would just as soon forget about the 1982-83 season. So would his players.

For the first time since 1977-78, the Ducks did not win 20 games, and the unofficial title of the No. 1 in the Northwest went to OSU instead of Oregon.

Heiny points to injuries and a lack of depth as reasons for Oregon's tailspin. The Ducks lost six of their last eight games.

"We're putting last season behind us. It was frustrating for everyone," says Heiny. "We were down to five or seven players at the end and we had people playing out of position."

Although his team wants to forget last year, Heiny believes last year's situation will help the Ducks when they open their season Nov. 17 in San Luis Obispo, Calif. because of last year's situation.

"We will be better off because we will be returning seven players who all have a lot of experience and all started at one point last year," said Heiny.

Heiny says sophomore guard Heather McDuffie was one player that benefitted from the player shortage.

"Heather is a better player this year because she was forced to mature quickly last year."

Playing out of position as a point guard, McDuffie averaged 9.2 points a game while dishing out close to four assists per contest.

With a wealth of depth, Heiny plans to bring back the Duck attack of old — a pressing defense and fast-break offense.

"Last year we got away from it (fast-breaking and pressing) just because we didn't have the bodies. We had to play a style that suited our personnel," Heiny says.

This year, Heiny is optimistic Oregon can play a running game. Two reasons for his optimism are the return of All-American candidate Alison Lang and freshman red-shirt Lauri Tennant.

Lang was the nation's sixth leading scorer last year (23.9), and led the NorPac Conference in scoring, rebounding (12.4) and blocked shots (4.9). In the first four games last year, Tennant averaged 11.8 points before being sidelined for the year with torn ankle ligaments.

"Lauri will make a big difference for us this year," says Heiny.

With Tennant in the lineup, Heiny feels Oregon would have lost only six or seven games during the season rather than 14.

Both Tennant and Lang want to forget about last year and start anew as much as their coach.

"We can't wallow in it (last year's performance)," says Tennant. "We're going to be underdogs at first because of last year, but a lot of people are back and everyone is ready to learn and are practicing hard. We are going to do very well."

Lang is equally confident.

"Last year we had a lot of downs. At practice, sometimes we only had five players and the coaches had to step in and play," says Lang. "This year we are going to surprise a lot of people."

The Ducks have been practicing since the first week of October, and Heiny is pleased with his team's effort to get over last year and to concentrate on this year.

"Everyone is working hard and very op-



Photo by Dean Guernsey

Alison Lang and Helen Higgs go for broke during practice. The women's first game will be during a tournament Nov. 17-19 in San Luis Obispo, Calif.

timistic. I'm pleased with the performances so far," says the seventh-year coach.

"Last year was frustrating for us and for the fans, and we want to come out and show them that we are working hard," says McDuffie.

Besides improving their overall performance, the Ducks want to get back on top of the Northwest, where they have dominated for so long.

"We will be back on top," says Heiny without hesitation. "Oregon State lost an

awful lot."

Lang makes her prediction, saying Oregon would be in the top 14 by January.

The Ducks put that prediction to the test early. They play Georgia, ranked first in pre-season polls, at Portland's Guisti tournament Dec. 18-20. Then it's No. 2 University of Southern California, last year's NCAA champion, at the Winton Tire Classic Dec. 29-30.

"We should be good. We are good," says Heiny.

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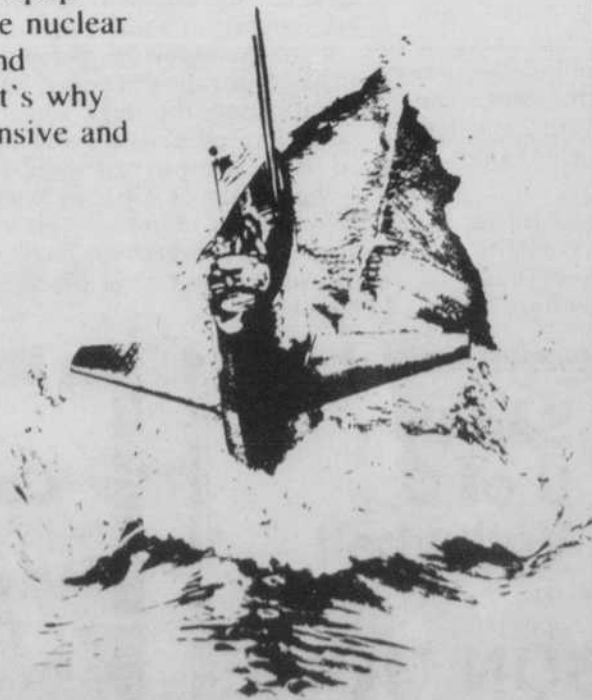
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