

Ducks hope to find answers; open season tonight

By Capi Lynn
Of the Emerald

As the Oregon football team wraps up a season of disappointments, the men's basketball team prepares to answer some questions, with the hopes of improving on its 11-17 overall record and ninth-place finish in the Pacific-10 Conference a year ago.

The Ducks commence the 1986-87 season tonight at McArthur Court when they host the Norwegian National Team for an exhibition contest at 7:35 p.m.

Head coach Don Monson enters his fourth year at the helm for Oregon looking toward what he refers to as "a season of question marks."

"There are some question marks and how they develop and now things come together, plus a little luck is all that's involved," said Monson of the key to the Ducks' success this season.

Several key questions need to be answered before a conclusion can be reached as to the success of the Ducks this season.

•Sven Meyer, a 6-foot-11 transfer from Northern Idaho Community College, is a player who can run the floor, shoot the ball and do a lot of offensive things, according to Monson. But can Meyer adjust to the rebounding and defensive prowess of the Pac-10, having not played a minute of major-college basketball?

•Team captain Kenny Sprague returns this season from a knee injury, which sidelined him only 13 games into the season, and has yet to perform at 100 percent, Monson said. Can Sprague overcome his injury, pick up where he left off (averaging 10.8 points and 7.8 rebounds per game before being shelved last season) and play at full capacity?

•Senior David Girley has been a vital sixth man and part-time starter for the Ducks in the past, averaging 5.6 points a game a year ago. Monson acknowledges Girley's contribution on the offensive end, but says that he has not proven

himself defensively at this level. Will Girley become a better defensive player and provide for the Ducks on both ends of the court?

•Transfer Jessie Nash, who occasionally seems to show signs of being able to play forward, is strong, can jump and is a good athlete, Monson said. But can the 6-foot-5 Nash become consistent and give the Ducks some added depth at the forward position?

•Backup forwards Ian Craig and Greg Senior will also play important roles on the team this season. Will they be able to help the Ducks if Meyer gets into foul trouble?

Despite the question marks, the Ducks will be a different

team compared with last year, primarily because of experience and maturity, Monson said.

"They (Keith Balderston, Rick Osborn and Anthony Taylor) have more confidence in what they're doing, they're not so apprehensive and they know what to expect," Monson said.

Balderston, Osborn and Taylor all started for the Ducks as sophomores last year and Monson believes their maturity may make the difference in close games, something that troubled Oregon last year (the Ducks were 1-12 in games decided by 10 points or less).

With the talent he has, Monson is optimistic about the upcoming season.

"When you've got a center such as Meyer and an outstanding athlete like Taylor...you've got a pretty good chance of some development, but again there's a lot of things that can happen," Monson said.

Taylor, a 6-foot-4 junior guard, will undoubtedly be called on by both the team and coach Monson for production and leadership.

Taylor was the fifth-leading

scorer (17.0) in the Pac-10 last season, scoring 20 or more points in eight games, and received honorable mention all-league recognition. He also established a one-season mark for most steals (41) and was steady at the foul line, shooting 81 percent.

Monson is quick to say that Taylor's presence on the floor is

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