

# HOME SWEET HOME

## Spikers return from a rocky road trip

By Cliff Pfenning

When the Oregon volleyball team returns to the friendly confines of McArthur Court on October 30 to face Washington State, it may be a sigh of relief that the crowd hears coming from the Ducks' bench. After playing almost three-fourths of the season on the road, Oregon finishes the regular season with seven of nine matches at home, where boisterous, loud, even obnoxious fans have urged the Ducks on.

During the past two seasons, Oregon has won nearly seventy percent of its home matches, playing in the toughest conference in the nation.

Although fans have come to expect Oregon to play well at home, the success of this year's team has been its play on the road, where the Ducks have won 9 out of 14 matches prior to this weekend. What's even more surprising is that most of the games have been against Top 20 teams.

At the beginning of the season, however, Oregon had its problems. The Ducks lost the first three games of the season to Top 20 teams, before finally beating Miami (Ohio) in the consolation round of the Iowa Carousel Classic, the Ducks' fourth match.

The positive product that emerged from the early losses was a closer group of players, and a recommitment to team goals by its players.

"It's a fairly alien, hostile experience to go into someone else's gym, and try to win," Head Coach Gerry Gregory said. "It's not an easy

thing to do, but it brings out the best in a team."

"We're not used to losing that much," junior team captain Tina Adolph said. "We had two or three team meetings, and they settled us down."

"This is probably one of the closest teams I've been on," said senior outside hitter Teri Kramer. "We went through some hard times together, and that is a significant factor in how close we are," Kramer said.



Tuck Choo

After the Iowa tournament, the Ducks went to San Diego where they won the Aztecs' tournament, beating the host team in a five game final.

"After our first three losses, I thought we became a very good road team," Gregory said. "We were very tough in the San Diego tournament."

The tough road schedule paid early dividends when Oregon finally got back home. The Ducks swept UCLA and USC for the first time ever, beating the Bruins in front of more than 2,000 people.

"I think it's a lot easier for us to play at home," Gregory said. "We've got the confidence of knowing our fans are going to help us as much as possible, and I think it's intimidating with some of the teams we bring in."

Of course, the Ducks aren't the only team that gets a boost from the noise. "Sometimes the fans are so enthusiastic it brings out the best in the other team too," Gregory said.

Some of the loudest supporters, a handful of students affectionately known as "The Crazies," have drawn considerable attention from opposing teams, officials, and even other fans for their rabid style of support. But the players don't seem to mind.

"I think they're great," Adolph said. "My freshman year we didn't have anything like that. I'm really flattered that they're willing to go out and act so crazy." ©