

Netters would be in fourth with weekend wins

By Cam Sivesind
Emerald Sports Reporter

Arizona and Arizona State pay a visit to McArthur Court this weekend as the Oregon volleyball team concludes its regular-season play.

The 14th-ranked Ducks face Arizona tonight and Arizona State Saturday night, both matches starting at 7:30 p.m.

This weekend is important for the Ducks. By defeating USC in Los Angeles last weekend, the Ducks have a chance to improve their post-season ranking.

"I'm excited about the past weekend where we were able to beat USC," Oregon coach Gerry Gregory said. "It placed us in a position where this match has more meaning from a national seeding position than it would had we not beaten USC."

With two wins this weekend, the Ducks would have a good chance to host their first-round match of the NCAA playoffs.

Gregory said he does not believe that hosting a first-round match will be the main motivation behind the Ducks this weekend.

"We know the importance of

the match," Gregory said. "I think we'd be better off just focusing on its another college volleyball match and another opportunity to do well and not worry too much about the drama of the situation."

The Wildcats of Arizona are the better of the two Arizona schools, so tonight's match looms heavier for Oregon. Arizona is 8-8 in the Pacific 10 Conference, 16-10 overall, and are in sixth place behind the Ducks.

Gregory noted that any one of the Arizona players can hurt the opposing team, making good defense a must.

"They have a very, very athletic team," Gregory said. "They're probably as athletic as USC."

The Wildcats senior setter Mary Linton can hurt the Ducks because she is a good blocker, a good defender and sets a good match, Gregory said.

Junior outside hitter Terry Lauchner has had Oregon's number in the past.

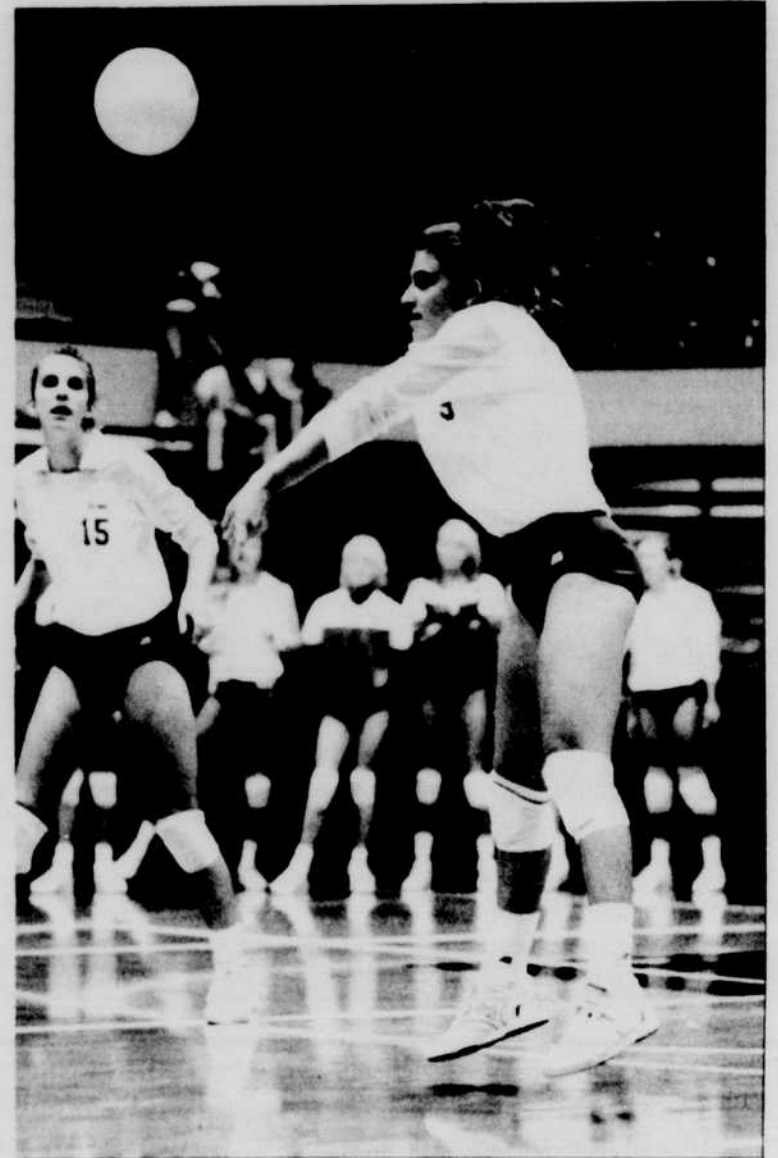
"Terry Lauchner, their outside hitter, has been extremely effective against us," Gregory said. "Virtually the rest of their starting lineup has, too. It's hard to say who could hurt us the most."

Gregory is right. The Wildcats, who are ranked 10th in the Tachikara/AVCA poll and 11th in the NCAA poll, have a number of outstanding players.

Lauchner leads her team in kills with 3.94 per game and Linton leads the team in assists with an 11.4 mark. Senior middle blocker Kelly Waage tops the team in blocks with 1.31.

Arizona State is a better team than their 3-13 conference record and 12-20 overall record shows. The Sun Devils are on a four-game losing streak and have lost 11 of their last 13 matches.

"Arizona State is a team that's also very talented," Gregory said. "They beat us fairly decisively in Phoenix. They have a Pac-10 all-star in Sue Nord and a rising young star in Mindee Gowell, who has recovered from knee injury her



File Photo

Melissa Terzian (no. 9) will be playing her final regular season games for Oregon this weekend when the Arizona schools visit McArthur Court.

freshman year."

Gowell, a sophomore outside hitter, leads the Sun Devils in kills with 2.82 per game, and is leading the digging department with 3.65. Nord, a senior middle blocker, is the school's all-time block assist leader with over 300 in her career.

"They are a very powerful team, a team that I'm sure is hungry for a win and hungry to repeat what they did to us in Phoenix," Gregory said.

Other statistical leaders for Arizona State include senior

setter Noelle Fridrich with 9.75 assists per game, and sophomore outside hitter Debbie Penney who adds 2.43 kills and 2.96 digs.

Gregory is confident of his team's chances this weekend and says his team is much better now than they were the first half of the season.

"I think just the matter that we are a better team in the second half of the year than we were in the first half is very positive," Gregory said. "That is something that you want to see happen."

"I also think that the beginning of the year we were struggling with shaking off last year's losing season and I think that we were a little bit less confident," Gregory added.

Oregon is currently fifth on the Pac-10 behind USC. A sweep of the Arizona schools would most likely vault the Ducks into fourth ahead of Southern Cal. The Trojans lost to UCLA Tuesday night, opening the door for Oregon.

Statistical leaders for Oregon include senior outside hitter Michele Krebsbach with a 3.99 kill average. Senior setter Stephanie Snyder owns the team assist lead with 9.53. Senior outside hitter Melissa Terzian has 3.13 digs per game, followed closely by Krebsbach with 3.11.

Terzian leads the Ducks in service aces with a .42 mark while senior middle blocker Stephanie Drier leads the team in hitting percentage with a .248 mark. Sophomore middle blocker Mindee Adams commands the blocking duties with a 1.0 posting.



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