

Oelke's second chance pays off for tennis team

By Cam Sivesind
Emerald Sports Reporter

Christian Oelke is lucky to even be on the Oregon men's tennis team this season.

After two weeks of tryouts before the season, Oelke was the 11th man on Oregon's 10-man roster. Oregon coach Buzz Summers had to let the freshman from North Bend go, but not for long.

When Summers lost a player, he gave Oelke a call and the rest has been a climb to the top for Oelke.

Oelke, one of a bundle of young players on the team this season, is currently the Ducks' No. 6 player, but he has played as high as No. 2 this year. Injuries to Oregon's experienced players have thrust a strong group of freshmen into top-flight positions at different times throughout the year, including Oelke.

The fact that Oelke's level of play is as high as it is surprises Summers.

"It's really great to see a kid from North Bend do this well because it's tough to get your game up to the level that's necessary to make it here," Summers said.

North Bend is not the tennis hotbed of the nation, Summers said.

"The fact that he got to be as good as he did at North Bend was really something in his favor," Summers said. "At Oregon he's had a lot more competition, and hopefully the coaching has been helpful, plus we play all year. In North Bend I don't think they play during the winter because it's so wet, and there's no indoor courts in town."

Summers had a lot more praise for the young right-hander.

"His game has really come up a lot. He still needs to improve on some aspects of

his game — net play and serving," Summers said. "He never gives up. He's a great athlete, and he gets to a lot of shots a lot of kids would not get to. He's real determined."

A quick chat with Oelke is all a person needs to determine that tennis is far from being the focus of all his attention.

Oelke is the first to admit that tennis is not the reason he enrolled at Oregon. Oelke is pursuing a degree in biology with hopes of going in to pre-medicine. The ultimate career goal for Oelke is to become a surgeon.

The right-hander carries a 3.5 grade point average, a mark he hopes to improve upon, and is a member of Sigma Chi.

Oelke really has not set any further tennis goals for the remainder of the season. His initial goal was to be in the top six, because the top six flights are the people who play. Since he has achieved that, most of his spare time is spent on school work.

The freshman quickly added he really has enjoyed playing with the Ducks this season.

"The team is great. We have a great time," Oelke said. "I like all of the team members. They're all great guys."

And one of those team members is fellow North Bend graduate Ted Thoren. Thoren, who graduated a year ahead of Oelke, was a pleasant sight for the newcomer.

"It was nice to have someone from my home area around," Oelke said.

Family support is something Oelke can fall back on as well. Oelke's parents have made the trip from North Bend to Eugene to watch him play on numerous occasions.

Summers also mentioned the likable na-



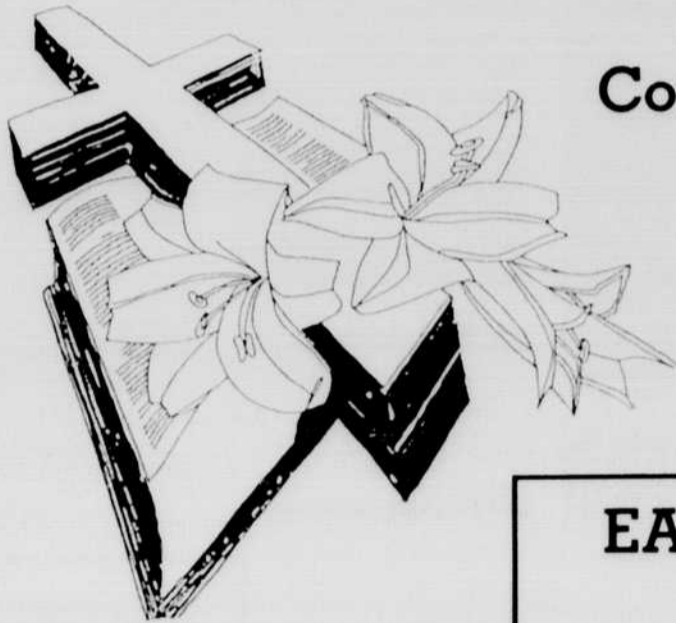
Photo by Mark Ylen

Christian Oelke, a late addition to the men's tennis team, has been one of Oregon's top players this season, despite being only a freshman.

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Covered Tennis Courts	7:57		10:22	
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