

Photo by Sean Poston

Junior Mindee Adams has fought back from injuries to become one of the elite blockers in the Pacific-10 Conference, as well as an offensive player the Ducks can rely on.

Adams blocks her way to respect

Pac-10 foes know junior has a reputation for tough defense

By Robert Weber
Emerald Sports Reporter

Certain athletes earn the distinction of being somebody that people hate to play against but would love to have on their side. Mindee Adams is quickly becoming such an athlete.

Adams, a 6-foot junior middle blocker, is earning this type of reputation with her all-out aggressive style and well-rounded play that is making her and the Ducks two opponents that nobody looks forward to meeting.

"Mindee's greatest assets are that she's a consistent performer in all aspects of the game," Oregon Coach Gerry Gregory said. "She's a real competitor who has worked very hard on her game."

Adams is known throughout the conference for her blocking ability but is showing people that she is far from a one-dimensional player.

"Mindee's game is advanced both offensively and defensively," Gregory said. "She has probably the quickest arm swing in the conference."

Her fellow teammates and coaches showed their confidence in Adams earlier this season by naming her team captain. It's a role that Adams enjoys but doesn't dwell upon.

"Being captain is something that I enjoy but I don't feel like I'm the ultimate leader of this team," Adams said, "because all of the juniors on the squad are leaders."

"My most important job as captain is to be the go-between for the other players and coaches."

The 1990 Ducks have sprung from the gate to a 2-1 conference record and an overall mark of 10-3 using a balanced attack headed by Adams and fellow front liners Dawnn Charroin and Julie Jeffery.

Adams and the Ducks opened their season on a high note by winning the Boise State Labor Day Classic that included victories over Utah State, Boise State, St. Mary's and Michigan.

Adams garnered the tournament MVP by collecting 37 kills, 14 digs, nine blocks and a tournament-high .368 hitting percentage.

Adams was surprised by the award and was quick to share the credit for the Ducks' fast start with her teammates.

"The reason that we have had some success this year is because as a team we have some great attitudes," Adams said. "We are a hard-working group who are determined to do what it takes to reach the goals we set for ourselves."

The Ducks will be severely tested throughout the remainder of the season in the Pacific-10 Conference, easily the nation's toughest volleyball

conference year after year, but Adams wouldn't have it any other way.

"I thrive on playing in the best conference against the best teams and players," Adams said. "I love being an underdog because it makes us fight harder as a team."

Fighting is something that separates the Ducks from other conference teams.

"Schools like UCLA show up and expect to win on their name alone," Adams said. "Our team is a group of real fighters and I feel that we will be able to surprise some teams who aren't ready for a real fight."

After knocking off California in three games and losing to Stanford in three tough games at McArthur Court, the Ducks revenged an earlier defeat with a marathon five-game victory against Oregon State. It was a match that was special to both Adams and the team for a couple of reasons.

"The win against the Beavers was big for us not only because they had beaten us earlier but because of the respect we have for them as a program," Adams said. "We know that when our two teams meet that the team who is on top of their game that night will walk away the winner."

After starring for and graduating from Woodbridge High School in Irvine, Ca., Adams decided to continue her volleyball career at Oregon.

"I chose Oregon because when I visited Eugene with my club team I loved it," Adams said. "I wanted to get out on my own and really liked the coaches and team at Oregon."

A knee injury kept Adams out of action her freshman year forcing her to work even harder on her game, but Adams has never been one to back down from a challenge.

On the court, she has spent countless hours trying to make herself the best all-around player possible. She has spent the last two years establishing herself as one of the elite blockers in the Pac-10 and insists that the success didn't come easy.

"I don't really have the physical attributes that most blockers have because of my small hands, short arms and lack of a great vertical jump," Adams said. "But I feel my quickness, determination and ability to anticipate the hit helps me make myself successful."

Adams' hard work has continued off the court as she works toward a degree in human services with a minor in psychology. After graduation, Adams plans on coaching volleyball and counseling at the high school level.

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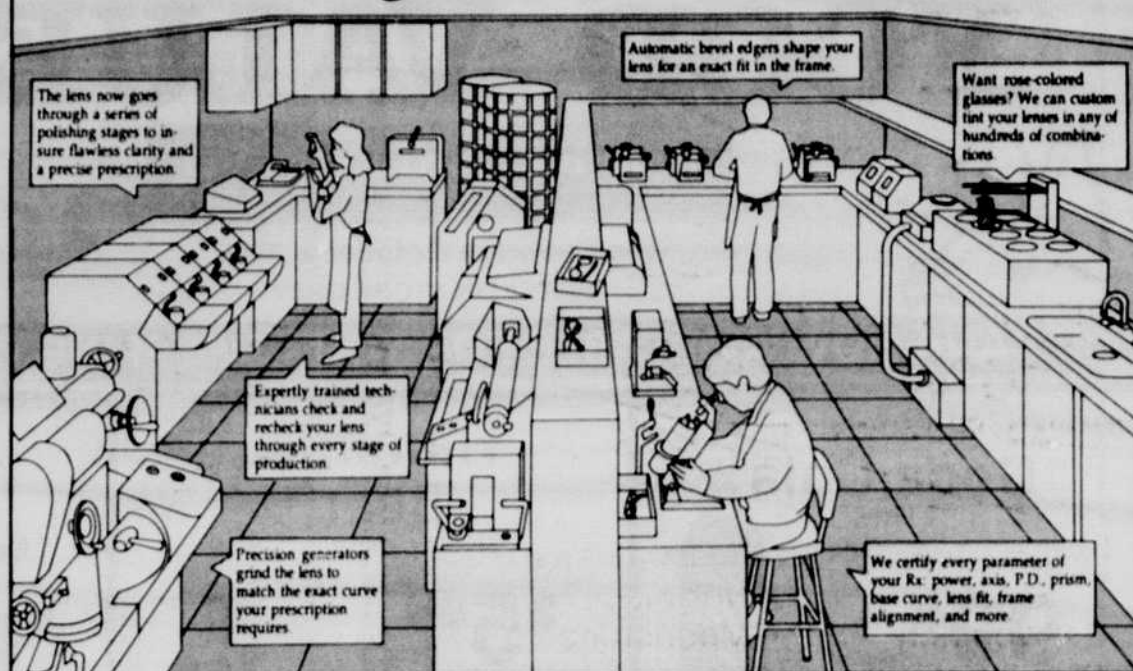
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