

# Oregon faces tough road tilts

By Robert Weber  
Emerald Sports Reporter

Oregon volleyball Coach Gerry Gregory and his Ducks head south this weekend for their first conference road test — and what a test it will be.

The Ducks meet second-ranked UCLA at famed Pauley Pavilion Friday night and complete the weekend trip with a Saturday night contest against the 16th-ranked Trojans from USC.

The Ducks are off to a 10-3 start this season, with a 2-1 conference record. They opened with a tournament win at the Boise State Labor Day Classic in Boise, Idaho, and followed that with a tie for third place at the J.M.N. Premier Tournament in Fullerton, Calif.

The Ducks, who lost five seniors from last year's team, are led by a group of experienced juniors that includes Mindee Adams, Dawnn Charroin, Julie Jeffery, Molly McGrath and Ali Watkins.

Charroin leads the team with marks of 4.17 kills and a 3.70 dig listing while Jeffery's ace average of .83 places her 13th in the country in that category.

McGrath tops the squad with 12.3 assists a game, and Adams shares the lead in block average with sophomore Marcie Price at 1.1 a game.

As in years past, UCLA and USC are expected to be the class of the Pacific-10 Conference. The Bruins are the perennial favorite to claim another Pac-10 title.

UCLA is off to a quick start with a 10-1 overall record and a 4-0 conference mark. The Bruins' lone loss was a grueling five-gamer to No. top-ranked Nebraska.

The Bruins have dominated the Ducks in the past and hold an 11-1 series edge. Oregon's only

victory came in 1987.

Coach Gregory knows that his team will be the underdog in both matches this weekend, but he knows what it will take for the Ducks to win.

"UCLA is really a who's who of high school All-Americans," Gregory said. "To have a chance against them we must reduce our silly errors and be consistent serving."

"The better we pass the higher our hitting percentage will be," Gregory said, "and for us to win our hitters will have to decrease their errors."

Adams, the team captain, said the Duck players are keying up for a big opportunity on Friday night.

"We have never played well in the Wooden Center but we all feel like this is going to be the year," Adams said. "The Bruins better not come out expecting to win this match on their name because we are going to give them a real fight."

The Ducks trail in the USC series 6-5, but a road win a year ago should provide some added confidence this weekend.

The Trojans stumbled out of the blocks this season, losing their first three games before rebounding to post a 6-4 overall record and a 3-1 conference mark. The Ducks' best opportunity for a win this weekend may come Saturday night against USC.

"USC has struggled a little bit at the start of the year," Gregory said. "They are a very talented team, but they are extremely young and will improve with time."

The key to success against the Trojans may rely on the Ducks' ability to try and concentrate on their game plan and not dwell on the fact that they are playing USC.

"We feel that if we can go down there and play our game and play well that we will defeat USC," Adams said.

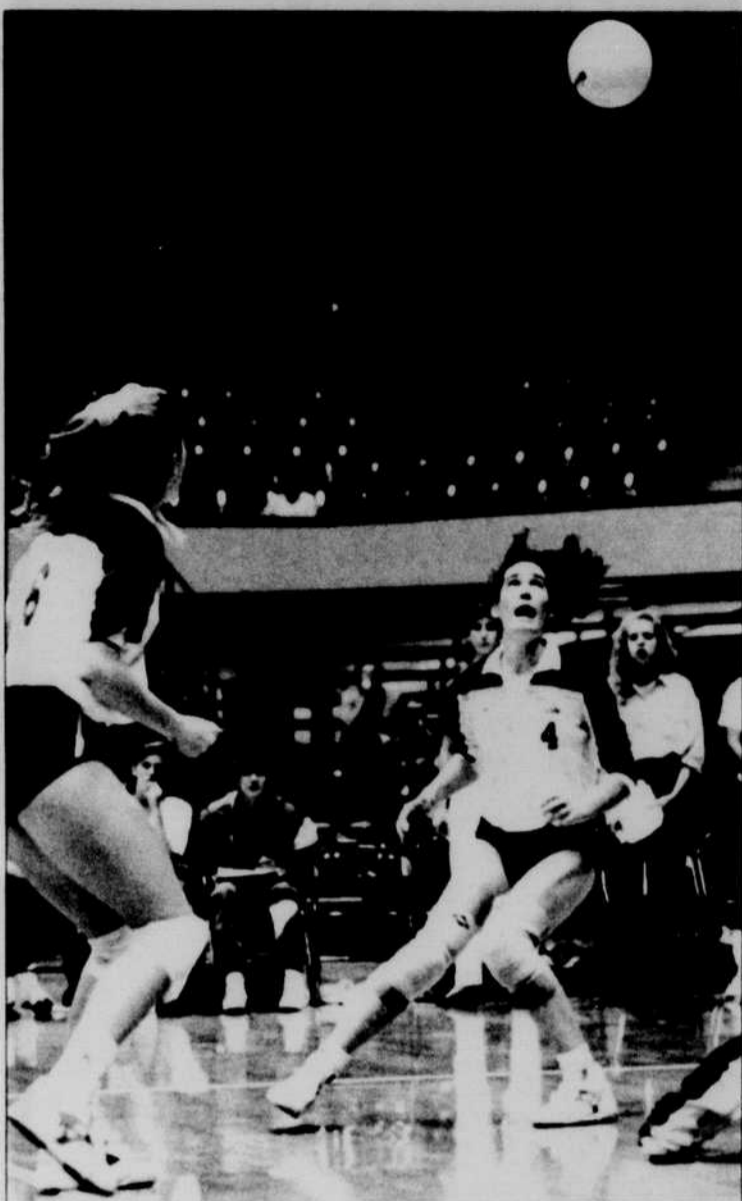


Photo by Sean Poston

Juniors Molly McGrath (4) and Dawnn Charroin will need to keep their eyes on the ball this weekend against second-ranked UCLA and 16th-ranked USC.

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