

Volleyball squad set for future

Junior setter provides solid nucleus

By Robert Weber
Emerald Sports Reporter

When one thinks of Eugene, passing and quarterbacks, the name Bill Musgrave comes to mind, and deservedly so, but there is another athlete at Oregon who fits that description.

Meet Molly McGrath. McGrath, the 5-foot-9 junior setter for Oregon's volleyball squad, is quickly and quietly asserting herself as one of the better setters in the Pacific-10 Conference as she helps lead the Ducks toward another trip to the NCAA tournament.

Oregon Coach Gerry Gregory stressed the importance of McGrath in his team's success this year.

"Molly's done a great job this year of getting everybody involved in the offense," Gregory said. "Without her we would really be in trouble."

Although she doesn't wear shoulder pads or a helmet like Musgrave, McGrath's game centers around passing just like the Ducks' other quarterback. Her 12.2 assists per game average ranks her ninth in the nation.

As the setter, it's McGrath's responsibility to direct the team on the court. That type of responsibility places a lot of pressure on McGrath to perform well each time she steps onto the court, but she doesn't seem to mind.

"There is a lot of pressure," McGrath said, "but I kind of like it. I enjoy running our offense and having to think of plays to run."

Being the only true setter on the squad, besides freshman Kalie Kerr who is redshirting this year, puts added pressure on McGrath to avoid injury or illness.

Earlier this season, she came down with the flu two days before the Ducks were to host Arizona State. However, when game time rolled around McGrath was in the starting lineup that Friday night and was a key to the Ducks' victory over the Sun Devils.

"Friday night I was still feeling a little bit woozy," McGrath said of the Arizona State match. "It's weird because sometimes you play your best games when you're sick."

Sometimes a setter's best games aren't good enough to grab the headlines. Unlike the other quarterback at Oregon,

line-up as a freshman before moving to the setter role after Stephanie Snyder's knee injury.

Trying to replace the established Snyder was a tall order for somebody who was just getting her feet wet in the college game, but McGrath did the job and gained some valuable experience along the way.

"Replacing Stephanie was really tough," McGrath said, "because I was much more comfortable playing the back row. It was difficult because the college game is so much quicker than the high school game."

Gregory said one of Mc-

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Grath's quality play has yet to grab the spotlight.

At Oregon, as with most volleyball teams, the big hitters who lead the team in kills each game are the one's who grab the spotlight, but McGrath says she doesn't mind being out of the limelight.

"I don't mind being in the background," McGrath said, "because I think it's fun watching the others get all the attention. I've never really been one to seek out attention."

Although she was recruited as a setter, McGrath hasn't always set for the Ducks. In fact, she began her career as a back row defender. She made an immediate impact on the Duck program by occasionally working her way into the starting

Grath's strong points is her ability to set the quick attacker.

"We're running a quick attacking offense this year," Gregory said, "and I really feel like that is Molly's forte. She has really excelled at the quick set to the middle attackers."

A comfortable, confident McGrath is a major reason why the Ducks are well on their way to returning to the NCAA tournament that they visited last year.

McGrath says that the team believes they will not only make the tournament this year but that they will stick around a little longer.

"Our goals are to finish third in the Pac-10 this year and advance past the first round of the playoffs," she said.



Photo by Sean Poston

Junior setter Molly McGrath setting here to Mindee Adams has been the "other" quarterback Oregon fans are talking about.

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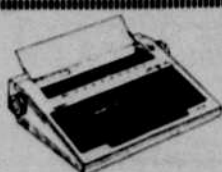
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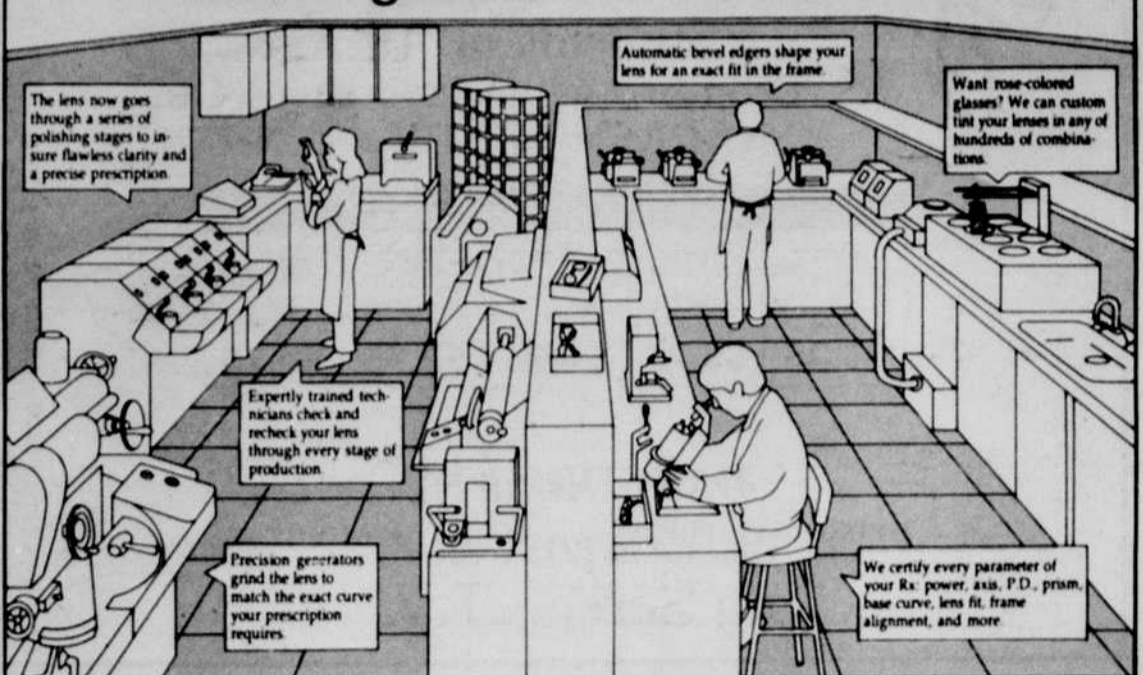
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