

Ducks head to New Mexico for softball toumey

By Robert Weber
Emerald Sports Reporter

Defense plagued the Oregon softball team last season and has continued to be a problem for the Ducks through eight games this season.

Tami Brown, coach of the 18th-ranked Ducks (4-4), says her team must improve defensively if they are going to be successful in this weekend's tournament at New Mexico State.

"The offense has been good," Brown said, "but we have to cut down on the errors."

Second-ranked Fresno State, No. 5 Oklahoma State, New Mexico State, Wisconsin-Green Bay and McNeese State are just some of the teams competing in Las Cruces, N.M. The Ducks

will play three games Thursday and two Friday before beginning bracket play on Saturday.

Brown said her team has been working hard and is confident it can be successful this weekend.

"As far as attitude goes, the team has been great," Brown said. "We've been working very hard on defense in practice. We have to knuckle down on defense, and then we'll fare

well."

Through eight games, Oregon has outscored its opponents 41-33, but 14 of those 33 runs allowed were unearned. The team has committed 21 errors in eight games in compiling a .915 fielding percentage.

Offensively, the Ducks, who are hitting .291 as a team and averaging more than five runs a contest, have been led by junior shortstop Kim Manning and

freshman second-bagger Jennifer Piper.

Manning appears to have regained her swing after a somewhat disappointing sophomore year at the plate. The former all-American and all-Pac-10 performer is hitting .370 and has smashed all three of the team's home runs to go along with 10 runs batted in and four stolen bases.

Piper, who played her high

school ball at South Eugene, leads the team with a .391 batting average and has made only one error.

Junior Katie Wiese and freshman Rachele Taylor have done all of the pitching for Oregon this year. Taylor sports a 3-0 record and 1.05 ERA while Wiese, a second team all-conference selection a year ago, has struggled at 1-4 with a 3.99 ERA.



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