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VOLLEYBALL

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these new recruits could have on the season.

"We've got a lot of new talent and a lot of old talent, and we're just going to mix it in with the old and see how we can go with it," Charroin said.

"The freshmen have just come in and been ... awesome," said Adams, the team captain. "They're challenging all of the returners, and the returners are taking that challenge and going with it."

Despite winning nine of its first 10 games last season, injuries crippled Oregon in the latter half of the season, and the Ducks dropped nine of their last 10 Pacific-10 Conference games. They finished in a seventh-place tie in the league. Gregory promised the Pac-10 will be just as loaded this fall.

"The challenging side is that the Pac-10 continues to get tougher every year as well," Gregory said. "You know, there's not much difference between the number three team on paper and the number nine

team on paper. Or the number 10 team for that matter."

A pre-season poll of Pac-10 coaches shows defending NCAA champion UCLA is favored to repeat as conference winners, with Stanford picked to again finish at second. Arizona State is tabbed for third, and the Ducks are close behind in a pre-season fourth.

'It helps we didn't lose anybody to graduation, and we have a nice influx of talented young people coming in.'

— Gerry Gregory

pre-season fourth.

"You have to be realistic," Gregory said of pre-season hopes. "The fact that the Pac-10 is so strong — your expectations have to be within the realm of realism. But I can say this, this is our deepest team. I don't feel nearly as nervous about one or two having physical problems."

An injured ankle sidelined star hitter Charroin for part of last season, but the physical setback hasn't slowed her de-

sire to win. Charroin said winning in volleyball is a state of mind, and this fall's success just depends on how badly Oregon wants it.

"I think we could win the Pac-10. I think we could win the national championship," Charroin said. "It just depends on people's efforts and what they want to put into it and how the team gels together."

Adams predicts a finish at the front of the Pac-10 and forewarns the rest of the conference to beware of some surprises from the Ducks this year.

"I think we're going to be right up there at the top," Adams said. "They probably won't rank us up there right away, but we're going to shock some teams. They're going to be really surprised with some of the firepower we have."

Gregory hopes Adams is right for her own sake. The coach wants his team to finish well as much for the Ducks' five seniors as anyone else.

"I know the seniors have been through the highs and lows," Gregory said. "They know what it's like to have a great year, and they know what it's like to have a crummy year. They want to finish on a real strong note."

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