



File photo

Outside hitter Julie Jeffery (left) and middle blocker Angee Henderson (right) square off against Arizona tonight and Arizona State Friday. Oregon needs a win to pull out of a 0-2 slump.

Oregon needs win to end slump

By Jayson Jacoby
Emerald Sports Reporter

The first win of the young Pacific-10 Conference volleyball season can't come soon enough for the Oregon Ducks.

"We really need a Pac-10 win," said Oregon Coach Gerry Gregory. "We've been in a bit of a slump, and we need to get out of it."

Oregon, 10-4 overall and 0-2 in the Pac-10, will have its chances tonight and Friday when it faces Arizona and Arizona State.

The Ducks take on Arizona, 3-8 overall and 0-2 in the conference, at 6:00 p.m. tonight, and they travel to Tempe, Ariz., for a 6:30 p.m. match Friday against Arizona State, who is 4-4 overall and 0-2 in the Pac-10.

But the Ducks may be a stronger team for this week's two games as junior middle blocker Marcie Price could see action for the first time this season. Price, who broke a finger in a pre-season practice, was second in blocks on last year's team when she was named Most Improved Player.

Oregon's other injured starter, senior captain Mindee Adams, will not make the trip. Gregory said Adams' injury, first thought to be shin splints, now shows signs of being more serious. He said Adams will likely miss Oregon's two home

games next Friday and Saturday against the Washington schools as well.

The Ducks have to block better than they did during last weekend's losses to highly ranked UCLA and USC, and the injuries haven't helped either, Gregory said.

"We've had injuries that were unforeseen and lineups have changed," he said. "In volleyball it's important to know who's on your left and who's on your right."

On Thursday, the Ducks will be facing a team that Gregory said is greatly changed from the 18-13 (8-10 in the Pac-10) squad that swept Oregon in two matches last year.

The Wildcats, picked by Pac-10 coaches in a pre-season poll to finish seventh in the conference, return last year's conference assists leader, junior Heather McCormack.

Arizona State, on the other hand, returns three top players from last year's 19-16 (8-10) team that split two matches with the Ducks.

Seniors Mindy Gowell (fifth in conference kills, first in digs, all Pac-10 selection last year), Debbie Penney (8th in conference blocks) and sophomore Nancy Christian (all Pac-10 freshmen team) anchor the front line.

Although Gregory said practice was upbeat this week, and that his team was ready for that first conference win, he knows they must improve from last weekend to do so. "We need good, solid performances from everyone," he said.

He would like to start with a win over the Wildcats Thursday.

"The second one (Pac-10 win) is always easier than the first," Gregory said.

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