

Netters snap six-match losing streak with home victory

By Jayson Jacoby
Emerald Sports Reporter

The Oregon volleyball team got back on the winning track Friday night with a win over Arizona, but a gutsy comeback bid Saturday against Arizona State fell short at McArthur Court.

The Ducks didn't move up in the Pacific-10 Conference standings with the split. They remain ahead only of winless Arizona with a league mark of 2-9 and 12-11 overall record.

A weekend split looked to be almost a certainty Saturday night as Arizona State took a 13-4 lead in the third game, after winning the first two 15-10,

15-1. The Sun Devils scored the last 13 points of the second game rout, in which Oregon could manage only two kills.

But the momentum of the match switched dramatically after Oregon sophomore Nicole Hedberg came into the third game with the Ducks trailing 13-4. Hedberg, who was last year's rookie of the year for the Ducks, had recorded only five kills in 13 game appearances this season.

Hedberg sparked the Ducks and a small crowd of 571 Saturday with four quick kills as Oregon rode a wave of momentum — and a stretch when they could seemingly do no wrong — to a 15-13 win, trimming the

Sun Devils' match lead to two games to one.

The Ducks scored 14 straight points in a stretch that included the third and fourth games.

Oregon took an 8-6 lead in game four, but Arizona State scored six straight points and the Ducks couldn't muster another comeback, falling 15-10 to close the match.

"Nicole Hedberg came in and lit a fire for us," Oregon Coach Gerry Gregory said. "That was probably our best comeback of the year."

"Hedberg came in and sparked them," Arizona State Coach Patti Snyder said. "They played gutsy; we weren't doing anything so wrong, just everything they touched turned to gold."

"It felt very good to get in there and get an opportunity to help the team," Hedberg said.

Dawnn Charroin led the Ducks with 11 kills, and Stephanie Warren added nine kills and 13 digs.

Friday night saw Oregon snap a six-match losing streak and the return of injured starters Mindee Adams and Molly McGrath playing together for the first time since Adams went down with a stress fracture in mid-September.

It was the first time this year pre-season starters Marcie Price, Adams and McGrath played in the same match.

Adams, playing in the front row for the first time since her injury, started the match, while McGrath, who hadn't played since hurting her back three weeks ago, played in all four games and led the Ducks with 28 assists.

Oregon won the first two games 15-12, 15-13 after spotting the Wildcats leads of 5-0 in the first game and 8-5 in the second.

Arizona outit the Ducks 241 to 200 in a 15-8 third game win, but Oregon dominated the final game, scoring the

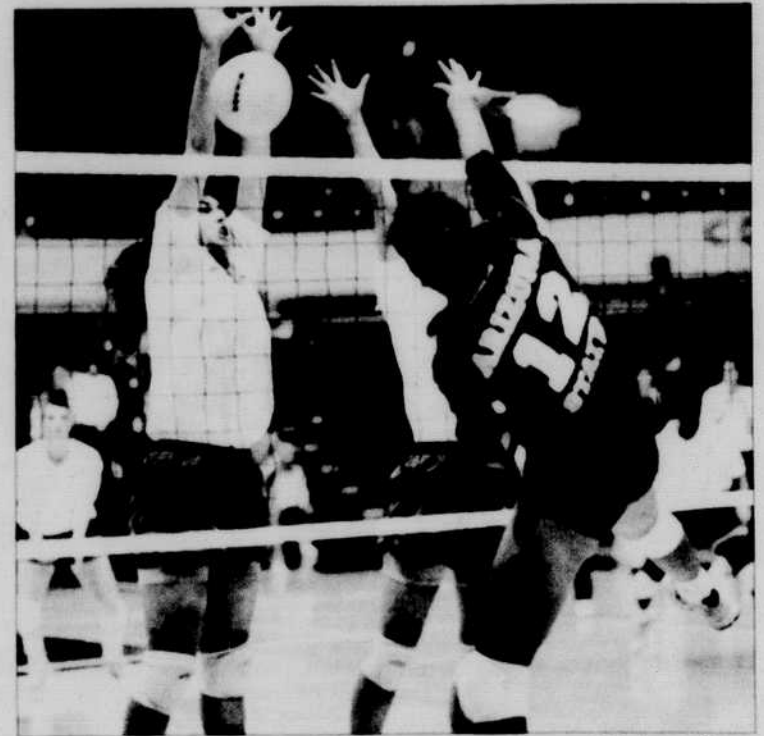


Photo by John Stoops

Oregon's volleyball team fell in four games to Arizona State Saturday night at McArthur Court despite an exciting Duck comeback.

first 12 points en route to a 15-7 match-ending win.

Warren led the Ducks with 12 kills on a .385 hitting percentage, and Charroin hit .308 with 10 kills. Warren also had a match-high 24 digs.

"We played a lot better than we have in the past," Gregory said.

Adams had nine kills and 13 digs in her first real action since her injury. She said the injured shin felt good after playing most of a four-game match.

"I have to get my endurance back again," Adams said. "It was an all right night for a first night back."

"It was exciting to see Mindee Adams back in there," Gregory said. "She just adds so much. She was a bit rusty in her skills, but you have to remember she hasn't played in more than five weeks."

Adams was leading the Ducks in kills when she was injured, and is still the team leader in hitting percentage at .316.

Oregon's offense also benefited from the return of McGrath, its starting setter. Gregory said McGrath's back injury was getting much better, but that McGrath sprained her ankle on the last play of the Arizona State match.

He said her status is uncertain, but McGrath was able to walk off the court on her own with a noticeable limp.

"It's great to see Molly come back in," Gregory said. "We've got some nice depth now in our setting position."

Gregory said McGrath will return as the starter, barring any more injury problems.

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