

## ◀ VOLLEYBALL PREVIEW ▶

# Oregon to put close on season

By Jayson Jacoby  
Emerald Sports Reporter

The Oregon volleyball team will try to cap off a disappointing season, which has featured a school-record 9-0 start and a 2-13 stretch, with wins tonight and Saturday in Los Angeles.

The Ducks, 14-14 overall and at 4-12 in conference play placing them ninth in the Pacific-10 Conference, will take on 12th-ranked USC (19-6, 11-5) tonight at 7:30 and fifth-ranked UCLA (22-5, 14-2) Saturday at 7 p.m. Oregon dropped both earlier meetings in McArthur Court but has beaten USC the last two years at the Lyon Center.

For one of the few times this season, the Ducks will be playing with a full team, as all three of Oregon's injured players, Mindee Adams, Molly McGrath and Marcie Price, will be ready to go.

But neither Adams nor McGrath, both seniors, will be at full strength. Adams missed several weeks and then has been able to play only one match weekly since suffering a stress fracture in her left shin during a September tournament, and McGrath has been hampered by a nagging lower back injury since early October.

Both players were looked upon as integral parts of what was expected to be one of the top teams in the Pac-10 this season, and their injuries have contributed mightily to the Ducks' inconsistency.

"We're showing a little bit of the potential that this team has," Oregon coach Gerry Gregory said. "Frankly, though, I think we were a better team at

**'I feel like it's been a real disappointment.'**

— Mindee Adams,  
Duck team captain

the beginning of this season. We are improving on some things."

The Ducks are coming off consecutive wins for the first time since the 9-0 streak, but regardless of the outcomes of this weekend's games, both Adams and McGrath expressed disappointment at what might have been this season.

"I feel like it's been a real disappointment," said Adams, last year's team MVP and the Ducks' team captain for the second straight year. "I could have been in there helping the team. I felt my fifth year was the year I could really have done some damage, and I feel like I haven't done anything."

But the 6-foot middle blocker from Irvine, Calif. has been far from a do-nothing player for the Ducks this year and in her career at Oregon.

After redshirting in 1987 following knee surgery, Adams became a starter her freshman year. As Oregon's captain last year, Adams led the team in blocks and hitting percentage, and finished third in kills.

Adams is ranked fourth in the Pac-10 this year with 3.44 digs per game.

But the stress fracture, which came during the JMN Premier Tournament in Fullerton, Calif., kept Adams out of action for several weeks and has ham-

pered her performance when she has played.

"Mindee started the season as our top hitter," Gregory said. "She was in shape, and all her skills were finally honed and she was ready for a great senior year."

But continued pain from the injury has kept Adams from practicing most of the season and has prevented her from playing to her potential.

"At times it will feel really good," Adams said of the injured shin. "But as soon as you start putting pressure on it, it starts hurting. It's been real frustrating."

Adams will be in the lineup tonight against the Trojans and will try to close out a standout career by helping the Ducks to two upset wins.

"I feel real good about the years here," Adams said. "I would like to have ended with a good year. But you learn from experiences like this. I've learned that volleyball isn't everything in life."

McGrath, too, has suffered from some of the same frustrations.

She was third in assists in the Pac-10 last season, and despite the nagging injury, she is currently eighth in the league in that category.

"It was frustrating for me to get injured," McGrath said. "I had high hopes coming into the season. This team has never had a chance to gel."

Oregon can still finish the season above .500, but it will be difficult facing the powerful Trojans and Bruins, who Oregon has beaten in only one of 14 total meetings.

## WOODS

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game of the season at Texas Tech, and LaBounty has been slowed considerably by a knee injury.

The trio combined for 137 tackles, 24 sacks and 41 tackles for losses last year, but those numbers have dropped to 77, seven and 11 this season.

But Woods, the eternal optimist, sees a bright side to all the problems.

"I'm learning to play hurt," he said. "It's a page in my book I'll need later in my career if I'm going to move up to the next level."

Woods said despite his lack of healthy playing time he still has a chance at the big time.

"I think people can see my talent," he said. "They know I've played hurt and they've seen me play at 100 percent last year."

Two of Woods' coaches also see NFL potential in their big lineman.

"I think he has a chance," Oregon head coach Rich Brooks said. "But I'm not the guy making the decisions. It's been a tough year with all the injuries. Hopefully he'll get a chance to play in a post season all-star game or something and show his skills."

Oregon defensive line coach Joe Schaffeld said he doesn't think Woods has shown his potential as a Duck.

"He's injured right now, but he has the potential to play in the pros," said Schaffeld, who has coached the likes of Matt



Photo by Jeff Paslay

Senior nose tackle Marcus Woods, hampered by several injuries, struggled to duplicate last year's success.

Brock, an Oregon standout on the defensive line now in his third year with the Green Bay Packers.

"He has quick hands, and he's strong in the legs. He just hasn't been able to show what he can do this year."

Woods said that if he contin-

ues to improve, he should be able to play in the NFL.

"I have a lot more potential that I haven't shown," he said. "I can get a lot stronger and faster. I just have to work on my strength and my technique. Just put me on the field and give me a chance."

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