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## SPORTS

# Undefeated women win two more

5-0 record is  
best in 8 years

By Jake Berg  
Emerald Sports Editor

It's been eight years since an Oregon women's basketball team began a season like this, but Elwin Heiny has not forgotten how to enjoy it.

"Nice," said the 16th-year head coach after his team went 5-0 with a 73-54 stomping of St. Joseph's at McArthur Court Saturday.

The Ducks are off to their best start since Heiny's 1983-84 club started the same and finished with a 23-7 record. Ore-

**'This team could be one of the best ever if we continue to grow.'**

— Elwin Heiny,  
Women's basketball coach

gon will attempt to go 6-0 for the first time since the 1978-79 campaign when the Ducks go on a three-game road trip beginning at Montana Dec. 16.

Winning is nothing new to Heiny. After all, last year was his first losing season, but he said a year's experience may make this team one to remember.

"This team could be one of the best ever if we continue to grow," Heiny said.

The fact that Oregon is undefeated is maybe not as surprising as the odds that the team has had to win in spite of.

Sara Wilson, normally the Ducks' starting center, missed the first four games of the season because of a stress fracture in her foot and was supposed to be back in uniform by the next game, but Heiny said Saturday the sophomore will be out much longer because she has been diagnosed with mononucleosis.

Wilson started most games during her freshman year and was expected to be one of Oregon's top returners. Even without Wilson's aid, though, the Ducks have shown what they are made of.

"Still, knowing that we've done really well without Sara ... it doesn't get easier from here," Heiny said of the Ducks' final road trip before the Pacific-10 Conference season. "I just hope she'll be back by Pac-10s."

Not that Wilson's absence has shown. Senior Marne Smith, who had never started a game in her career before being moved up as Wilson's replacement, has looked solid much of the time, especially on defense. Saturday against the Hawks, the 6-foot-4 Smith recorded four blocks and was 3 of 6 from the field.

Also stepping up to bolster the Ducks' inside strength is forward Debbie Sporcich, who scored 21 points and grabbed 16 rebounds Saturday after playing probably her worst game ever as a Duck in the 72-65 Friday win over Boise State at Mac Court.

"I felt better," said Sporcich, who won Pac-10 Player of the Week honors last week. "I wanted to do good last night



Photo by Andre Ranieri  
Oregon's Staci Wallenborn stretches for two of her team-high 27 points in the Ducks' 72-65 win over Boise State.



Photo by Kim Nguyen  
Ilesha Smith battles for the board in the Ducks' Saturday win over St. Joseph's.

(Friday), but I was just a little tense."

Heiny acknowledged his star sophomore was nervous Friday and said he saw signs of it again Saturday, but his confidence in Sporcich never faltered, he said.

Sporcich's performance also impressed St. Joseph's coach Stephanie Gaitley, whose team allowed Sporcich to score 15 and grab 10 rebounds in the first half alone.

"She's an excellent player," the Hawks' first-year coach said. "She does a little bit of everything well."

Saturday, the whole Oregon team did a little bit of everything well.

The Ducks caused St. Joseph's (2-3) to turn the ball over 29 times — stealing it 12 times — and only had 14 turnovers themselves. The Oregon defense limited the Hawks to 34.5 percent shooting for the game and 31.3 during the second half; and though Sporcich

was the only player to score in double figures, 11 Ducks scored at least three points.

The Oregon win avenges last year's opening-season loss at St. Joseph's, 76-70. Much like the Ducks were last year, St. Joseph's is going through a youth movement, with a roster that includes only one senior and one junior.

"We're going through some growing pains right now," Gaitley said.

Boise State proved to be a pain to the Ducks Friday. Both teams were undefeated going into the game, but the Ducks held on to their lead and endured numerous Bronco stomps to win 72-65.

Oregon led by three at the half and extended its lead to as many as 11 in the second half, but Boise State (4-1) did not let up.

After trailing 53-42, the Broncos roared back to take a 61-59 lead with five minutes left in the game, but Missy Stowell's three-point play on the Ducks' next drive put Oregon ahead for good.

Staci Wallenborn, who led all scorers with 27 points on 12 of 18 shooting, took command of the opportunity, putting away Boise State with five straight points.

"We're all going to have our good games," said a modest Wallenborn, who scored Oregon's first eight points.

Sporcich was invisible in the game for the first time in quite a while. She did not score in the first half and fouled out in the second after tallying only four points.

"Debbie did not have her best game," Heiny said, "and we still won."

This season, Oregon has been very good at winning despite the odds.