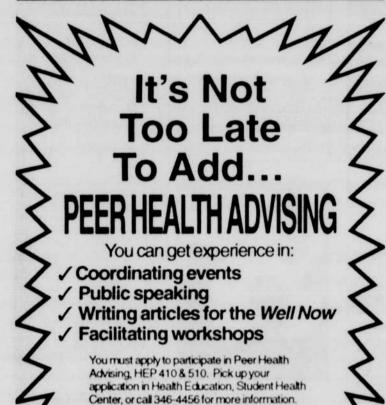


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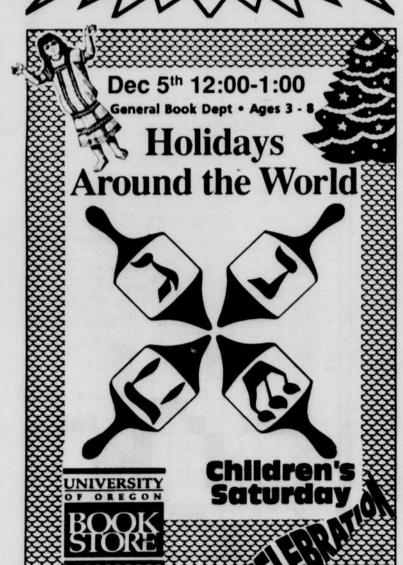
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Oregon Daily Emerald Sports —

Women cagers open season

By Steve Mims

The Oregon women's basketball team should get an idea of how good it is this weekend when the Ducks play two of the top 15 teams in the nation at the O'Charley's Classic in Nashville, Tenn.

Elwin Heiny returns for his 17th season as head coach of the Ducks, and he said he believes his squad could return to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 1987.

I think we can make the NCAA tournament," Heiny said. "Our depth could be a problem; we have only 12 players and three are freshmen. If we stay healthy we should be able to compete.

Sara Wilson and Debbie Sporcich are both coming off of injury-plagued seasons when they only played together in three games for about 20 minutes. Wilson suffered from a stress fracture in her right foot, and Sporcich fractured a bone in

"Our inside game is outstanding," Heiny said. We want to get Debbie and Sara the ball as much as possible and have them shoot it.

Sporcich, a 6-foot-4 junior, was Oregon's second-leading scorer last year, averaging 12 points per game. She led the team with 8.7 rebounds per contest in 18 games. Sporcich played in every game during her freshman season, averaging 15.1 points and 9.8 rebounds and was named to the Pacific-10 Conference all-freshman team

Wilson, a 6-foot-3 junior, has yet to establish herself as a force in the conference, but she is healthy and led the Ducks in their only exhibition game this year. Wilson averaged 9.1 points and 5.1 rebounds last season, but she paced Oregon with 20 points in the Ducks' 70-67 loss to the Australian Institute of Sport two weeks ago.

The fortunes of Wilson and Sporcich will depend a lot on point guard Missy Stowell. Stowell, a 5-foot-6 junior, started 26 of Oregon's 28 games last season and finished second on the team with 100 assists while scoring more than 10 points per

Stowell is also the team's best long-rangeshooter, making 49 three-pointers last year while shooting 36 percent from the three-point line.

Sophomore Jennifer Johansen and junior Cindy Murphy will back up Stowell at point guard.

"Missy will be our point guard," Heiny said. 'Jennifer has looked good in practice and Cindy can help out as well. Even Debbie could play there if we needed her."

Sophomore Jessica Schutt started at off guard in the Ducks' exhibition game, but Heiny said Murphy, senior Peggy Swadener and freshman Debbie Reynolds will also see action at the spot. Reynolds, the sister of former Duck basketball player Keith Reynolds, has the Ducks' only significant injury right now with a dislocated shoulder, but Heiny said she should be back in action soon.

Senior Jean Maree Lillard, a 5-foot-10 forward from Roseburg, will start at small forward. Lillard, a junior college transfer playing in her third year for Oregon, averaged 6.4 points and 3.1 rebounds per game and played in all but one game. Lillard shot 55 percent from the field to lead the

'Jean Maree and Cindy will see most of the action at small forward and big guard; those two positions are interchangeable," Heiny said. "Jessica and Peggy can also play those spots, so we have



Missy Stowell will run the offense as the Ducks try to improve on last season's 14-14 record.

four capable players there."

Sophomore Karen Healea, a 5-foot-8 guard from Tigard, is Oregon's other returning player. Healea saw limited action in only nine games last

Diamond Livingston, Shanthi Barton and Reynolds are the Ducks' three true freshmen this year. Barton, a 5-foot-8 forward from Kirkland, Wash., was the Kingco Conference Player of the Year last year for Lake Washington High School. Livingston is from Gresham High School, and Reynolds attended Springfield High School.

The Ducks lost two players last month when junior lesha Smith decided to transfer and senior point guard Vanessa Selden was declared academically ineligible.

The Ducks' season begins Friday against 13thranked Southwest Missouri State, a team that went 31-3 last year and advanced to the Final Four. On Sunday the Ducks meet third-ranked Vanderbilt, which lost last year in the NCAA regional finals.

The Ducks' schedule does not get any easier when they begin Pac-10 play in January, as the conference should be as tough as it was last year when five teams were invited to the NCAA tournament. The favorite to win the conference is Stanford, which won the national title last year and returns as basically the same team from a year ago, including 1991-92 Pac-10 player of the year Val Whiting.

"Stanford is No. 1 in the country," Heiny said. But after them I feel the conference is wide open. With all the great teams in the conference it is tough to have a great record."

Thompson gets first-team honor

Oregon kicker/punter Tommy Thompson received first team all-Pacific-10 Conference honors for his work as the Ducks' field goal kicker Wednesday.

Thompson, who kicked 20 field goals this season and was a key contributor to Oregon's 6-5 record, was the lone Duck to be named to the first team.

The junior was also named to the second team on defense as punter, averaging more than 41 yards a pant. Thompson was joined by Oregon defensive linemen Romeo Bandison and Jeff Cummins on the second

Other Ducks receiving honorable mention awards were linebacker Joe Farwell, who led the Ducks in tackles this season; tailback Sean Burwell; free safety Eric Castle; offensive tackle David Collinsworth; punt returner Ronnie Harris; linebacker Ernest Jones; cornerbacks Alex Molden and Herman O'Berry; and offensive guard Jon Tattersall.

Washington State quarterback Drew Bledsoe was named Offensive Player of the Year, and Washington inside linebacker Dave Hoffman was honored with the Defensive Player of the Year award.

Arizona head coach Dick Tomey was named Pac-10 Coach of the Year.

CORRECTION

An article in the Dec. 2 issue of the Emerald incorrectly reported some dates of the Oregon wrestling team's schedule.

The Ducks will compete at the Las Vegas Invitational this weekend. The team will meet Oregon State Dec. 12.

The Emerald regrets the er-