

INJURIES

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game and become a dominant player for this team."

The biggest surprise for the Ducks has been the play of Karen Healea, a 5-foot-8 guard from Tigard, who has become a force on offense during Sporcich's absence. Healea scored just one point in nine games last season, but she is averaging more than 12 points per game in her last five outings, including two games of 16 points.

"Karen's play has really responded well this year," Heiny said. "It is exciting to see our young players coming on strong."

Oregon's other big gun on the perimeter has been 5-foot-6 senior guard Peggy Swadener. Swadener is fourth on the team in scoring with an average of 7.9 points per game, and second on the squad in three-point shoot-

ing percentage at 42.5 percent, trailing only Stowell, who is at 42.6 percent.

The addition of sophomores Jessica Schutt, who has recovered from a foot injury that bothered her during the preseason, and Jennifer Johansen gives the Ducks even more depth in the backcourt.

The injuries to Sporcich and Murphy have put the brunt of the front court load on Wilson's back, and she appears to be picking up her game in time for the conference season. Wilson scored a season-high 25 points in the Ducks' last game against Boise State to push her season average up to 14.8 points per game to go along with 7.6 rebounds per contest.

"I hope Sara can get about 20 shots per game," Heiny said. "She has to continue to play her old game, which is work, work, work to get opportunities."

Heiny said the injuries have

forced him to go with a three-guard lineup, with senior Jean Maree Lillard expected to start up front with Wilson until Murphy's injury has healed.

Oregon began the season in Nashville, Tenn., where they upset 13th-ranked Southwest Missouri State 58-56, and nearly upset then No. 3 — and now top-ranked — Vanderbilt before falling 72-68.

After a win over Brigham Young, the Ducks lost to 24th-ranked DePaul at McArthur Court 65-62, when Stowell's last-second three-point attempt hit the back of the rim.

Oregon came back to win five of its next games, including road wins over Portland and Idaho State.

Oregon begins the Pac-10 season at home against No. 24 California tonight, followed by a matchup with fourth-ranked Stanford on Saturday.

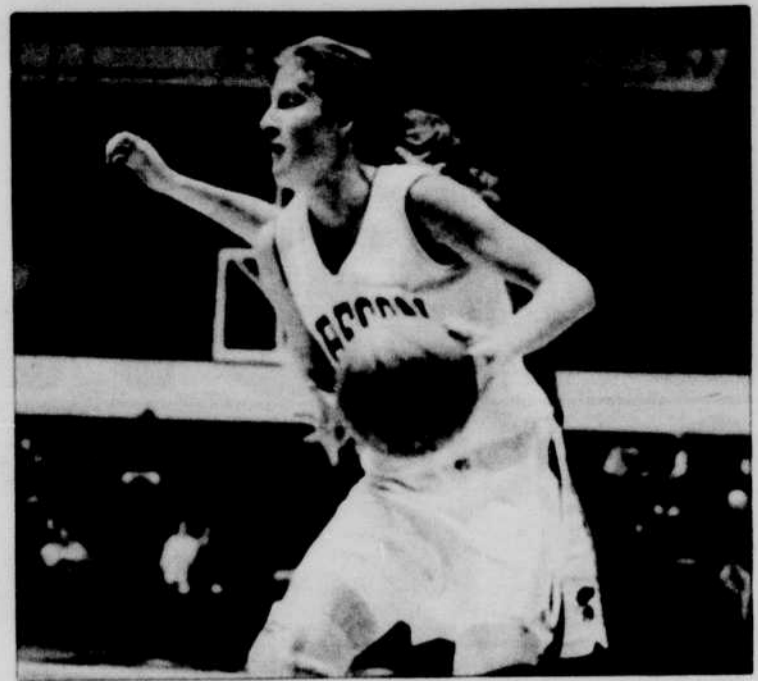


Photo by Michael Shindler

The Ducks expect to have Debbie Sporcich back in the lineup in three weeks.

MEN

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Khalid Reeves will run the offense for the Wildcats at the point guard position and has played well in the preseason. Don't be surprised to see Portland native Damon Stoudamire joining Reeves in the backcourt often this season. Together, they are probably the most talented tandem in the conference.

Senior center Ed Stokes has been hindered by a lack of intensity during the past three years, but still averaged seven points and seven rebounds last season. Stokes' performance this year could go a long way in determining the fate of the Wildcats.

Pac-10 Prediction: 14-4



3. Arizona State — Bill Frieder finally has a team with experience. The Sun Devils finished 19-14 last year and are returning four starters from that team, including forwards Jamal Faulkner and Mario Bennett and guard Stevin Smith, who all averaged in double-figures last season.

In the middle for Arizona State is Lester Neal, who averaged eight rebounds a game last season. This is a very balanced team

with a strong, experienced bench. The Sun Devils will likely turn last year's NIT invitation into an NCAA invite this season.

Pac-10 Prediction: 13-5



4. USC — The Trojans lost their three top scorers from last season's 24-6 team that went to the NCAAs, but they're still a pretty good team.

Guard Rodney Chatman will be the leader for USC. Last season he averaged eight points in the shadows of Harold Miner and Duane Cooper, but with both of them gone, look for Chatman to shine.

The Trojans are counting on a pair of freshmen — Kirk Homenick and David Crouse — to control the middle at the center position. If one of them can step up, USC will be in very good shape.

Pac-10 Prediction: 10-8



5. California — The Golden Bears are relying heavily on all-world freshman Jason Kidd to carry them to the promise land this season. After a 4-14 Pac-10 record last season, that may be too much to ask of last year's national high school player of the year.

Kidd has played well at times

in the preseason, but is currently hampered by a back injury. Forward Brian Hendrick averaged 16 points and 10 boards for the Bears last season, but he too has been nursing an injury in the preseason.

Without Kidd and Hendrick in the lineup, California is terrible.

Pac-10 Prediction: 10-8



6. Oregon — Go ahead, laugh it up.

Jerry Green has already led his team to more wins this season than Oregon won all of last season. The Ducks don't really have a starting lineup, but they do have a number of players who have caught on quickly to Green's running style of play.

Antoine Stoudamire was Oregon's main — and only — weapon last season, but now players like Jeff Potter, Orlando Williams and Aaron Johnson have helped to make this team more than the laughing stock of the league.

Don't be surprised if the Ducks finish above .500 in the Pac-10 and get an NIT invitation.

Pac-10 Prediction: 9-9



7. Oregon State — The Beavers are touting Scott Haskin as the best center in the

Pac-10. That may be true, but it's only because the Pac-10 lacks any true centers. Haskin will have a good year, but his supporting cast is grossly inconsistent.

On a good night, Oregon State has the talent to compete with the best in the conference; the only problem is that a good night for the Beavers comes once in a blue moon.

Brent Barry and Charles McKinney are a formidable backcourt duo, and forward Chad Scott has the ability to be one of the best big men in the conference, but inconsistency is the word to describe Oregon State.

Imagine what Ralph Miller would have been able to do with these guys.

Pac-10 Prediction: 7-11



8. Stanford — The Cardinal return three starters from last year's NCAA team, but big man Adam Keefe, who averaged 25 points last season, is gone. The loss of Keefe is the biggest for any team this season.

Stanford will have to rely on the outside shooting of guard Peter Dukes and the inside play of forward Brent Williams to get them through the season. Marcus

Lollie is a talented guard, but those three will have too much weight on their shoulders.

Pac-10 Prediction: 6-12



9. Washington State — The Cougars' Bennie Seltzer is the lone returning starter for a team that finished 22-11 last season. Gone are Washington State's four leading scorers from last year.

The Cougars lack size and experience up front, but they could get a kick from transfers Fred Ferguson and Tony Harris. Forward Rob Corkum will be looked to for a majority of the Cougars' strength underneath.

No tourney this year.

Pac-10 Prediction: 4-14



10. Washington — The Huskies lost only one player from last year's team, but they didn't have much in the first place.

Center Rich Manning averaged 16 points a year ago and could be the best center in the league. Brett Pagett, Mark Pope and Bryant Boston all return as starters for Washington, but a weak bench will have the Huskies struggling for wins.

Pac-10 Prediction: 2-16

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