



UCLA's volleyball team is ranked No. 1 in the country, partly due to the performances of two-time Pac-10 player of the week Annette Buckner (17) and Irene Renteria (10).

Pac-10 volleyball leads the way

By Scott Simonson
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon volleyball team is probably the best 10th place volleyball team in the nation. It is probably the best 4-21 team in the nation. In fact, it is probably one of the top 40 volleyball teams in the country.

This may not be enough to cheer up the volleyball team after a long, losing season, but according to three Pacific-10 Conference coaches, it's the truth.

"All 10 teams in the conference are among the top 40 in the nation," California head coach Dave DeGroot said after Saturday's match against the Ducks.

"The league is outstanding from top to bottom," Oregon State head coach Jeff Mozzochi said, agreeing with DeGroot's assessment. "A lot of people might snicker at that if they don't play in the conference night in and night out. But I don't think you'll get too much argument from Pac-10 coaches."

"We would do quite well against teams in most other conferences. There are a lot of conferences in the country where we would be able to win going away, make the playoffs, the whole nine yards," Oregon head coach Gerry Gregory said.

The NCAA playoffs begin in less than two weeks, with 48 teams receiving spots in the postseason tournament.

Although the Pac-10 has seven teams ranked in the top 25 nationally this week, Gregory expects only six teams to be selected from the conference for the tournament.

DeGroot said at least seven teams from the conference deserve a spot in postseason play. Mozzochi, whose team is in seventh place in the conference and is ranked 23rd in the nation, hopes Oregon State will be selected for the playoffs but admits the decision is a "political" one, with tournament officials reluctant to overload the tournament with too many teams from a single conference or area of the country.

The Pac-10's dominance of college volleyball is not new. The coaches said the conference owes as much to academics as to athletics for its success. DeGroot said Pac-10 schools "are among the best in the country" academically.

"With women's sports in particular, the decision on where to play sports has a lot to do with the quality of education that an athlete can receive," Gregory said, noting that unlike major college football or men's basketball programs, volleyball players rarely consider the chance of being able to play professionally when committing to a school.

The conference attracts athletes by virtue of being a perennial

PAC-10 STANDINGS		
	PAC-10	OVERALL
UCLA	15-1	24-1
Stanford	12-1	19-5
Arizona St.	11-5	18-5
USC	10-6	18-7
Arizona	9-7	14-9
Washington St.	8-8	17-8
Oregon St.	7-10	15-12
California	5-11	13-14
Washington	3-13	8-18
Oregon	1-16	4-21

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volleyball power and has a wealth of volleyball talent within its own geographic area.

"The West Coast tradition is still there," Mozzochi said. "It's not as strong as it was 10 years ago, but it's still important."

"The Pac-10 has been excellent in all sports," said Gregory. "It has tradition in football; it used to have that tradition in (men's) basketball. The women's sports are also used to having that tradition."

Tradition aside, the quality of the conference's volleyball teams is a reflection of the attention that the sport receives within Pac-10 athletic departments, Mozzochi said.

"There's a major commitment to the sport of volleyball at all of

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