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Four leave UO volleyball program

By Scott Simonson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon's volleyball team has signed three recruits to national letters of intent, but four players, including last season's co-most valuable player, have left the team.

Sophomore Karissa Meith, who led Oregon in kills and blocks averaged during the 1993 season, will not return to the University, Oregon volleyball head coach Gerry Gregory announced last Thursday.

Three reserves from the 1993 team also have left the volleyball program. Redshirt freshman Emily Coleman and freshmen Anne Swayne and Kristen Ruschinsky will not play for Oregon next season.

Meith returned home to Irvine, Calif. after fall term and contracted mononucleosis. She cited homesickness and a dislike for Oregon's climate as reasons she would not be returning, Gregory said.

"There really wasn't much communication with her ... I felt like she was just a little impulsive about her decision," Gregory said. "I really believe she was on the verge of becoming a dominant player in the league."

Ruschinsky had a promising freshman season as a swing hitter despite being hampered by injuries.

"Kristen Ruschinsky made her choice just because of geography," Gregory said. "Coming from the Toronto area, this was just too far away."

Ruschinsky has left the University to return to Ontario, Canada, and will attend school there.

Both Coleman and Swayne were quick hitters who played sparingly in their freshman seasons. Gregory said Coleman quit the team for "primarily academic reasons."

Coleman is pursuing a career as a teacher, and Oregon's College of Education has largely been eliminated by budget cuts from 1990's Ballot Measure 5. Coleman has decided to pursue her education degree at Southern Oregon State College in her hometown of Ashland.

Swayne will remain at the University but wants to concentrate on academics, Gregory said.

"She decided her real desires for her life did not include volleyball," he said.

The departures leave Oregon with a major vacancy in its starting lineup as well as several open scholarship slots. The national letter of intent signing period began last Wednesday.

Oregon has signed three players and is expected to announce more signings "within the next couple of weeks," Gregory said.

The Ducks have signed Madeline Ernst, a 6-foot-1-inch middle blocker/outside hitter from St. Paul; Amber Reinig, a 5-foot-9-inch outside hitter from Upland, Calif.; and Tia Stewart, a 6-foot-0 middle blocker from Clatskanie.

Ernst is a two-time Class 1A all-state selection in volleyball and also has gained all-state or all-league honors in basketball and softball.

Gregory characterized Ernst as a player having "excellent size with a big jump. Her only drawback is that she comes from a 1A school," he said. "She did come to our volleyball camp this last year. She clearly was the most dominant player there, and we had a number of 4A all-stars."

Stewart played for Glendora High School in Upland, as well as for Magnum Volleyball Club, one of the top club volleyball teams in the nation, Gregory said.

"She's 5-foot-9 but she jumps out of the gym. She's a very powerful player," Gregory said. He compared her athletic ability to that of junior swing hitter LaReina Woods when Woods entered the program but said that Stewart will arrive at Oregon with much more experience than Woods had.

Oregon finished last season 2-16 in the Pacific-10 Conference and 5-21 overall. The Ducks suffered from a lack of depth as well as a lack of experience last season, but lost only one player to graduation.

Gregory acknowledged that Meith's departure was a major loss, but he expects that freshman Dani Cordova and this year's recruiting class will give Oregon some players capable of replacing the 1993 co-MVP.

"The fact of the matter is, we needed a great commitment from every player on our team," Gregory said. "In certain respects we lose some experience in those players. ... Unless someone is totally committed — we can't succeed with something less."

Wrestlers gaining momentum, wins

By Dan Brown
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Momentum and consistency have arrived, and timing couldn't be better for the Oregon wrestling team. As their season approaches its climax, the

Ducks have been winning and winning big.

Strong victories over Brigham Young and Boise State two weeks ago and last weekend in Ashland against Southern Oregon, have given the Ducks momentum and additional confidence in preparation for the remaining duals and Pacific-10 Conference Championships later this month, along with the NCAA Championships in North Carolina.

"Anytime we step on the mat we plan to win," Oregon coach Ron Finley said. "It helps us prepare for those tougher matches down the line."

Down the line seems to have begun in November for the Ducks whose schedule has been tough all year. Oregon is 7-4 in overall competition and 3-3 in the Pac-10, but numbers rarely tell the tale.

"Many times its just been one match, one move that has prevented us from victory," Finley said.

All the point differences in Oregon's losses barely total last weekend's 19 point victory. Such competition adds a solid consistency and the Ducks seem

well prepared for the season finales.

"Everyone's starting to come back from injury and work hard toward the end of the year," said Cory Sonnen, a junior leading the team in victories. "We're really picking up the pace."

"We have made a few mistakes down the line but we have generally maintained good consistency," Finley said.

The win over Southern Oregon saw the return of previously injured Jeff McCoy, a strong competitor at 190 pounds. 118-pound Kevin Roberts and Cory Sonnen at 142 pounds both have more than 20 victories, and Peter Stayner at 158/67 pounds leads the team in dual meet victories.

Couple this with leadership in Mat Sprague at 177/90 pounds, experience in heavyweight Chris Anderson and inspiration from freshman Scott Norton at 150 pounds, and the elements of team are complete.

The Ducks have had sparse crowds for previous home matches, but are hoping for a packed house as they take on Cal-Poly at McArthur Court Thursday at 7:30.

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