

Coach: Pac-10 season will decide the Ducks' destiny this year

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inexperienced when you go through the roster," Green said. "It is totally opposite of the way it was last year. I thought last year was so veteran that we were ready at the start, and I felt that we were going to be successful."

Not so this year. The Ducks have five true freshmen on their roster, and at times this year they have shown it. The team has been streaky, playing good in one game and mediocre the next.

Although the Ducks are 8-4, it is hard to tell what team will be out on the floor: the team that fought Nebraska long and hard at the Big Island Invitational earlier this year, or the team that self-destructed on national television against Fresno State just weeks later.

"It is a little scary because the inexperience a lot of times has an unpredictable factor," Green said, "and it's exciting because I think everybody can play and help us."

But the kind of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde persona the Ducks have earned has made it hard for them to establish a winning trend, and has given Green the job of rebuilding his team.

"It is kind of like a redo, redoing things over again," he said. "We are not as solid as last year; it is a lot different feel. I am not as confident as I was last year. If you had asked last year 'Are you guys going to be good?' I would have said yes."

"This year if you ask if we are going to be good I would say yes, but I'm not sure when we will be good. It is certainly not the continuity that you would like where you have got seniors and juniors as leaders that have

been playing [for a while]."

Green is no stranger to rebuilding a program, however. In fact, the reason he came to Oregon was because the program needed to be rebuilt.

"We have rebuilt everywhere we have been," Green said. "There's two ways to get a college job. One is when a coach has moved on to bigger or better things — usually that program is pretty strong — and the other is when the program has been kind of embarrassed and the coach has to leave or is fired or whatever, and that was the case at the University of Oregon."

Green came to Oregon from Kansas in 1992 to take over an ailing program that had won only two Pac-10 games the year before. That year, Green had no open scholarships available to woo top prospects to Oregon because all of them were taken, but Green wasn't about to drop the established players that he had adopted. He built the program around what he had inherited.

"It all started when we got here," he said. "We had no scholarships, and we didn't come in like some other coaches do and just run players off. We knew that there were some players here that should not be playing high level Division I basketball, but... we stuck with what we were given. It wasn't the easy way to do things."

In fact, it developed a rather troublesome pattern that has given Green the job of rebuilding every two years. In his second year, Green had eight scholarships, but after signing the players he needed, he had only one to work with in his third year.

"It is almost like a two-year process to some degree," Green said. "This imbalance has been there basically since we got here. It is going to take a while [to correct], because it mandates if you lose eight of 13 players, you have got to bring somebody in, and how many do you bring

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— Jerry Green
Men's Basketball Coach

in? If you bring in eight [scholarship players], you just recreate the problem."

But Green is working to correct that imbalance. Despite having to go out and get so many new players this year, Green kept two scholarships aside for top prospects Mike McShane and Tyrone Manlove, both high school seniors who have already signed letters of intent with the Ducks.

"I think we will have it ironed out in about another two years," Green said. "Whatever we do now is kind of an investment into what we are going to get next year, because we will have all of these kids back."

That brings Green memories of the 1993-94 season, the year before he took the Ducks to the tournament.

"It reminds me a lot of our second year here, when I really felt that we were eventually going to be good, but we were not very good early," Green said. "But we came on late. It really felt like we were going to be there, we just didn't know how soon along it would come. That year, it came about halfway through the Pac-10 season, and really led us into this past year, which was a great year for us."

And the Ducks have shown glimpses of great play this year. Oregon has scored more than 100 points in four games this season, marking the first time an Oregon team has accomplished the feat.

"When we are calm and put the weight of the game on our defense we can be good," Green said.

we were very veteran and we were a lot more solid. But last year's team may not have the high-side that this team has."

In other words, when this year's squad gets on a roll, Green said, they can be a solid and competitive college basketball team.

"The way I look at this team is that it is an opportunity," Green said. "We have made some ground since we came here; we certainly have more respect since we came here. But whether this team can get to the NCAA tournament or not I don't know. We don't have a conference tournament at the end of the year, so what we do during the Pac-10 season is very, very important."

"I think that some of these kids as they go along are going to be outstanding college players. It's just a matter of giving them some time to mature and get into some wars like this one Thursday night."



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