

Former athlete excels with PSN

CAREER: Oregon stand-out Peg Rees explored playing, coaching and broadcasting sports

By Ryan Frank
Freelance Sports Reporter

Peg Rees recalls a post-game meal following one of her city league basketball games when she was approached by the son of a teammate. The kid asked if she was "the TV lady" and why she knew so much about sports. Rees explained with a smile that she had played basketball, softball and volleyball for the University of Oregon. The youngster asked which was her favorite sport. This is the question that Rees has been trying to answer for sometime now.

In four years at Oregon, Rees earned 10 varsity letters in three sports and made four trips to national tournaments in two different sports. From 1984 to 1993 she coached women's volleyball at Oregon and led them to three national tournaments. In 1993, Rees became a color commentator for women's basketball and softball for Prime Sports Northwest (PSN).

Currently Rees is in her first year as a half-time administrator and a half-time teacher with Physical Activity and Recreation Services. She teaches basketball and volleyball along with tennis, bowling and golf.

Rees lettered in basketball four times and three times in softball and volleyball at Oregon. She went to nationals in both softball and volleyball and helped turn the women's basketball program from the worst athletic program on campus into a winning team her senior season. And if it wasn't for time constraints, she said she would have liked to try out for the golf team.

When Rees began her career at Oregon in 1973, sports were quite different from the way they are now. There were no six-digit shoe contracts for coaches and no one had heard of free agency. Rees wore the same uniform for all three sports, worked a summer job because there were no scholarships for women and played basketball games where she now teaches it — in Gerlinger B54.

"In the 1970s we didn't train year-round like they do now," Rees said. "The sports would overlap a little. Basketball would start practicing when volleyball was finishing up. We went to nationals three times in volleyball so I had to join the team a little bit late, but I would only miss three or four weeks of practice and maybe the first pre-season tournament."

"When I finished volleyball I would start up with basketball the next Monday."

When Rees made her trip to the national championship tournament as an athlete in volleyball and to the Women's College World Series in softball, there were 24 teams in one place, ready to play until a national champion was decided.

"All 24 teams were on site. It was great," Rees said. "You saw such great play and met so many people. You were there for four or five days just playing and playing and playing and they whittled it down until they had a winner."

But with all the time that Rees devoted to athletics, she made sure that she kept up with her studies.

"I was a good student," she said. "It mattered to me. There was only a short amount of time to study so I had to focus when I did study. There was no choice. You had to learn to study on the road and in the bus."

Shortly after Rees finished her academic career at Oregon, she was hired as the volleyball coach at her alma mater. She spent nine years in that position, and during her last year coaching the Ducks she began working with PSN as a color commentator. But coaching was her first love.

"There are few things that afford you the opportunity to get to know people at their best and at their worst and be stuck in a situation where you have to meet goals together," she said. "It is really rewarding."

Before Rees began coaching at Oregon, she spent two years at St. Mary's High School, a private school in Los Angeles, and nine years at Lebanon High School in Lebanon, Ore., coaching the same three sports at the high school level that she played at the college level.

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— Peg Rees
PSN Color Commentator

While at Lebanon, she took the softball team to a third-place finish in the state tournament. Although she only coached volleyball at the college level, softball was her favorite sport to coach.

"In softball you could affect the outcome strategically and you had to be able to react at the moment," she said. "In basketball and volleyball you do all your coaching in practice."

But Rees didn't love everything about coaching.

"I don't miss the paper work, I don't miss the travel and I don't miss recruiting," she said. "Recruiting was the worst."

Despite those feelings, Rees said she is thinking about returning to coaching, although not at Oregon or even at the college level. She said she is seriously considering coaching for KidSports, an organization that runs sports programs for elementary school children.

"I would like to coach KidSports because I love kids and I think that it is important for kids to get good instruction at a young age," she said.

When she finished coaching at Oregon, Rees also became a color commentator for volleyball. Female sportscasters are something that Rees would like to see more often.

"I think it is extremely important that I am doing television [for PSN]. Either there aren't enough women who are qualified to talk about sports — but I don't think that is the case. I think people don't know how to find them — or women don't know that the opportunities exist," Rees said. "But I think it is really important for young female players to hear a woman talk knowledgeably about sports"

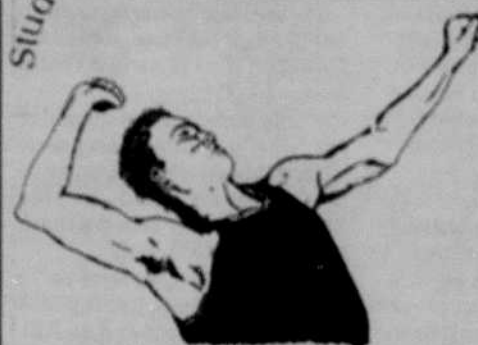
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