

Oregon wrestlers begin match play

The Ducks will open their season against both UC Davis and the Cardinal on Saturday

By Joel Hood
Sports Reporter

If road trips are a test of a team's strength and character, then head coach Ron Finley will know Sunday morning exactly what he can expect from the Oregon wrestling team this season.

Oregon begins its match play Saturday against a pair of Pacific-10 Conference rivals more than a hundred miles apart.

The Ducks, who open conference play two weeks earlier than they did last season, will battle UC Davis in an afternoon match in Davis, Calif., then travel to Palo Alto, Calif., for an evening showdown against Stanford.

However, Oregon is confident considering last season's sweep of the two schools.

"It's never easy opening the season in your own conference," Finley said, "but I think we'll do well. Though it's hard to know what to expect from conference

opponents early in season. Every team looks as though they've improved for this season."

Oregon could be atop that list.

The Ducks, who finished last season with one of their highest national rankings in school history (No. 14), return eight starters and have five wrestlers ranked among the top 20 in their respective weight classes.

The headliner is three-year starter Jeremy Ensrud, who was one of the Ducks' most consistent scorers last season. The 134-pound senior had a breakthrough season that included a first-place finish at the Pac-10 Championships, a fourth-place finish at the NCAA Championships and All-American honors.

"Both UC Davis and Stanford seem like they're improved from last season," Ensrud said. "But we're also really improved, and I expect us to do well this weekend. We are a veteran team and we are all really confident. I think

this could be one of Oregon's best teams ever."

Other wrestlers are taking a more cautious approach.

"I think Arizona State has to be considered the conference favorite," junior Sean Morgan said. "But the whole conference is better than it was last season. If Arizona State should fall a little bit, I think there are a fistful of teams that could jump up and take it."

The No. 6 Sun Devils are the preseason favorite to capture the conference crown and one of two Pac-10 teams ranked in the AWCA Top 20. The No. 18 Oregon State Beavers are the second.

But the Ducks aren't just looking for a Pac-10 title; Finley and Oregon's wrestlers have even higher aspirations this season.

"Our goal is to place high in the conference, but more than that, I'd like to see all of our guys qualify for the NCAA Championships," Finley said. "I think we have a team that can pull that off this season. We've had a great off-season, and we're as deep a team as I've ever had at Oregon."



WRESTLING

Ducks to face USC, UCLA over weekend

Oregon head coach Cathy Nelson feels the Bruins and the Trojans are teams that the Ducks can compete with

By Rob Moseley
Sports Reporter

The statistics don't paint a pretty picture.

An 8-16 record overall, including 0-12 in the Pacific-10 Conference, wins in just four of 36 games in those 12 losses, a ninth-place .188 team hitting percentage and a conference-worst 12.28 digs per game.

But don't think the members of the Oregon volleyball team, which heads to Southern California for two road matches this weekend, have given up hope.

"Every weekend's a new start for us," junior middle blocker Alli White said. "USC and UCLA definitely have their faults, and we're looking for two wins to start turning this season around and go out with a bang."

Up first for the Ducks is a rematch with USC, which swept Oregon at McArthur Court on Oct. 9.

The No. 7 Trojans (17-4, 9-4) have lost two of their last three, with a win over California sandwiched between losses to No. 4 Stanford and No. 18 Washington.

USC is led by its dynamic duo of middle blocker Jasmina Marinkovic and outside hitter Jennifer Kessy. Kessy leads the team with 345 kills, 236 digs and 18 service aces. She ranks third in the Pac-10 with 4.60 kills and 3.15 digs per game.

Marinkovic, who had a match-high 12 kills last time out against the Ducks, has been named player of the week twice in the Pac-10 and once nationally this season.

Her .413 hitting percentage is tops in the Pac-10, and she ranks fifth in blocks and seventh in kills per game in the conference.

Oregon's ability to have a well formed block will

be critical if it hopes to get a win this weekend.

"Blocking was a big factor [in practice] this week," White said. "We focused on both their outsides, Kessy and [UCLA's Kara Milling]."

The Milling-led Bruins (10-10, 5-8) beat California Saturday to snap a five-match losing streak. UCLA swept Oregon earlier this season.

Milling, who had 18 kills against the Ducks on Oct. 10, leads the team and the conference in kills with 429, good for 5.80 per game. She is third in the Pac-10 in service aces, and teammate Kimberly Coleman is first in assists with more than 15 per game.

Coleman has been an integral part in UCLA's 17.26 assists per game, which, if they maintain that pace, would break the NCAA record of 17.05 set by Pepperdine in 1996.

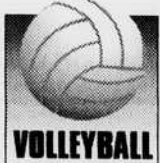
USC and UCLA will be facing an Oregon team that, despite losing, has looked impressive in its last two matches against California and Oregon State.

The Ducks won their first Pac-10 game in nearly a month against the Bears and lost game 1 to the Beavers 15-13, giving Oregon State the momentum it needed to take the match.

White, whose play was limited in each of those matches due to a shoulder injury, has made the decision to have season-ending surgery, she said. Although she declined to comment on the situation, she did not make the trip to Southern California with her teammates.

Even without the services of one of her better players, head coach Cathy Nelson remains optimistic about her team's chances the rest of the season.

"We've got six matches left, and those are six matches in which we can achieve some things," Nelson said. "USC and UCLA are both good teams, but they are both teams that we can compete with."



VOLLEYBALL

Men: All but walk-ons will get quality play

Continued from Page 11A

Kent promises that because Oregon has no superstars, he will play 11 deep. In other words, every player but the two walk-ons will get some quality playing time. But there are still some battles being waged for starting spots at certain positions, such as point guard. Saturday's contest is an opportunity for players to start to distance themselves from others.

"We want to show everyone how the coach Kent era is going to come in," Madden said. "We're not his first recruiting class, but we are his first players. We're going to be the first ones to run his offense and his defense. We're just looking to play hard

1997 Schedule

Nov. 12	Outback AS	7:05 p.m.
Nov. 21	at BYU	7:05 p.m.
Nov. 25	Portland St.	7:05 p.m.
Nov. 29	Santa Clara	1:05 p.m.
Dec. 2	at San Diego St.	7 p.m.
Dec. 6	Nevada	7:05 p.m.
Dec. 13	Loy. Mary.	7:05 p.m.
Dec. 18	Ste. F. Austin	7:05 p.m.
Dec. 22	at Vanderbilt	7:35 p.m.
Dec. 28	S. Illinois	1:05 p.m.
Jan. 3	California	5:35 p.m.
Jan. 5	Stanford	7:05 p.m.
Jan. 8	at USC	7 p.m.

Jan. 10	at UCLA	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 15	Washington	7:05 p.m.
Jan. 17	WSU	3:05 p.m.
Jan. 22	at Arizona	6:35 p.m.
Jan. 24	at ASU	6:35 p.m.
Jan. 31	Oregon State	5:35 p.m.
Feb. 5	UCLA	7:35 p.m.
Feb. 7	USC	3:05 p.m.
Feb. 12	at WSU	7 p.m.
Feb. 14	at Washington	3 p.m.
Feb. 19	Arizona State	7:05 p.m.
Feb. 21	Arizona	1:35 p.m.
Feb. 28	at OSU	3:05 p.m.
Mar. 5	at Stanford	7:30 p.m.
Mar. 7	at California	7:30 p.m.

and to play exceptionally well."

It will be the first of two exhibition games the Ducks will play at Mac Court before opening the regular season against Brigham

Young in Provo, Utah, on Nov. 21.

The second exhibition game will be against the Outback All-Stars next Wednesday.

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