

Women trying to bounce back from recent adversity

The loss of Jenny Mowe is the biggest setback the Ducks have experienced this season

By Ryan Frank
Sports Editor

The Oregon women began the season with lofty goals for a team so young.

A Pacific-10 Conference championship, a win over Stanford and an undefeated nonconference schedule were the things head coach Jody Runge told the media she was looking for at the season-opening press conference.

At the time, those seemed like realistic goals for a team that had earned a trip to the NCAA Tournament in each of Runge's first four seasons.

But that was before the injury bug bit the Ducks — hard.

Oregon began the season with a wealth of talent, but was a little undersized and inex-

perienced. But with one injury, the Ducks lost a great deal of both when Jenny Mowe went down with tendinitis in her right knee.

The 6-foot-5 sophomore center who was selected to the Pac-10 all-freshman team last season was the heart and soul of the team. She was the go-to player on the inside offensively and the dominating force on the defensive side. In the four games she played, she recorded 12 blocks.

With her, the Ducks had the firepower to play with any team in the conference, including Stanford (which hasn't lost a conference game since February 1995), but without her, they could have a hard time getting into the NCAA Tournament for the fifth season in a row.

Because of Mowe's absence, Runge is forced to start true freshmen at the power forward and center positions.

"It changes things dramatically because we have three true post players on the team right now," Runge said, "and we were short

handed before with four. It changes dramatically for us in that we have two freshmen starting, and they're having to learn as they go out on the floor."

Freshmen Brienne Meharry and Angelina Wolvert have worked themselves into the starting lineup by playing like seniors.

Meharry, a 6-1 forward out of Oregon City High School, is the Ducks' leading scorer thus far, pouring in 13.4 a game and grabbing 5.5 rebounds a contest. Wolvert, a 6-3 center from Camas, Wash., is adding 5.8 points and 3.2 rebounds a game.

Without the stand out play of Meharry and Wolvert, Oregon could be much worse off than it is.

The Ducks entered the conference season 4-4, then split their first two conference games in the Bay Area, beating California in the opener 71-54 and losing 97-72 to Stanford Sunday, to even their record at 5-5.

Meharry and Wolvert have provided the consistent play of upperclassmen, but is

that too much to ask of two teenagers for an 18-game Pac-10 schedule?

"I think it is a lot to ask," Runge said. "If it's too much to ask, it doesn't seem to be that they're struggling with it right now. Those kids are scoring points, they're rebounding and doing a pretty good job of defending without fouling."

While the two have provided a spark, it is the surprisingly poor play of the most experienced members of the team has been their downfall, Runge said.

"I think obviously Natalie needs to play more consistently," the fifth-year head coach said. "She's had huge games where she's played very, very well. Then I thought she had a very average game against Kansas, and I think she is a senior on this team and she needs to be a consistent performer for us."

"Right now, when we haven't been suc-

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Kent concerned about point guard play and team's focus

Ernie Kent feels his point guards need to improve to win in the guard-oriented Pac-10

By Chris Hansen
Assistant Sports Editor

They're young, they're inexperienced, they're small and they lack a star-quality, go-to guy who can take over and win games single handily.

So what does the Pacific-10 Conference season hold in store for this Oregon squad?

Its first Pac-10 series of 1998 might just be indicative of what to expect from the Ducks in league play this season.

Oregon looked impressive against California, a team also expected to struggle this season, last Saturday, winning 66-59. But on Monday, Oregon was routed by Stanford, 89-67, in a matchup against one of the conference's elite teams.

It is clear Oregon doesn't have the same

talent that UCLA, Arizona and Stanford have, but after those three, the Ducks should be able to play with any team in the conference on any given night.

"Our goal going in is to go out and play every team hard and play smart basketball," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "If we can do that, wins and losses will take care of themselves."

Realistically, it will take more than effort for the Ducks to overcome some of their shortcomings. Oregon played hard, intense basketball against Stanford and still lost by 22 points.

Kent listed two areas that are of particular concern to him, areas that he didn't see enough improvement in during Oregon's 5-4 nonconference campaign.

"Our point guard play is still a question mark for me," Kent admitted, referring to the play of Mike McShane and Yasir Rosemond. "These two young men have not had the continuity and the opportunity to get

minutes in their careers before ... and all of a sudden now, they are thrown out there in what is probably one of the toughest conferences in the country and one that is guard oriented."

McShane, a sophomore, has started all 11 games and is averaging 5.4 points and 4.3 assists. He has clearly outplayed Rosemond in what was expected to be a battle for the starting job at the beginning of the season.

Rosemond, who sat out last season after playing two seasons ago in junior college, has done some good things coming off the bench, but seems to struggle taking command of the offense. The sophomore is averaging 3.6 points and 1.4 assists.

However, neither player has really stood out, nor shown they are capable of taking over a game with their play or their leadership, the latter being an intangible that is pivotal for a point guard.

"I'm a little concerned that we are not fur-

ther along than what I thought we'd be at this point and time with Michael and Yasir," Kent said. "But they are coming, and they are learning, and they will continue to learn on the job through the course of the year."

Kent's other concern is the ability of his young team to stay focused for 40 minutes game in and game out, whether the Ducks are up by 20 points or down by 20.

"We are at a level with our team and with our talent that mentally, we have to be so well focused and so well prepared," Kent explained. "Hopefully with the excitement of the Pac-10 season starting, the intensity is going to go up and that will cause our mental preparation to go up, too."

"We have to understand that coming into the Pac-10, every team is an experienced team. We are the least experienced team in the league; therefore, we have to gain

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Pac-10 Schedule

WOMEN:

Jan. 8 USC	7 p.m.	Feb. 8 at USC	2 p.m.
Jan. 10 UCLA	1 p.m.	Feb. 12 WSU	7 p.m.
Jan. 15 at Wash.	7 p.m.	Feb. 14 Wash.	7 p.m.
Jan. 17 at WSU	1 p.m.	Feb. 19 at ASU	7 p.m.
Jan. 22 Arizona	7 p.m.	Feb. 21 at Ariz.	7 p.m.
Jan. 24 ASU	1 p.m.	Feb. 27 OSU	7 p.m.
Jan. 29 at OSU	7 p.m.	Mar. 5 Stanford	7 p.m.
Feb. 6 at UCLA	7:30 p.m.	Mar. 7 Cal	7 p.m.

MEN:

Jan. 8 at USC	7 p.m.	Feb. 7 USC	3:05 p.m.
Jan. 10 at UCLA	7:35 p.m.	Feb. 12 at WSU	7 p.m.
Jan. 15 Wash.	7:05 p.m.	Feb. 14 at Wash.	5 p.m.
Jan. 17 WSU	3:05 p.m.	Feb. 19 ASU	7:05 p.m.
Jan. 22 at Ariz.	6:35 p.m.	Feb. 21 Arizona	1:35 p.m.
Jan. 24 at ASU	6:35 p.m.	Feb. 28 at OSU	3:05 p.m.
Jan. 31 OSU	5:35 p.m.	Mar. 5 at Stan.	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 5 UCLA	7:35 p.m.	Mar. 7 at Cal	3 p.m.

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