

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY
December 2, 1998**Best Bet**
College Basketball
Great 8 Shoot-out
4:30 p.m., ESPNSPARK
from the
BENCH*Lindsey Dion has redefined her role
as a top threat off the bench*By Allison Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

Lindsey Dion is in her element. The gray Oregon basketball T-shirt she is wearing combines the two worlds that this 5-foot-10 sophomore has been primed for — college and athletics.

While some granddaughters spend their time eating ice cream cones and listening to their grandfathers tell childhood stories, Dion spent her time at footbal practice watching her grandfather coach the Fresno State Bulldogs. "All my life I've been around college athletics," Dion says. "I watched the players go through his practices, and I was around all of his coaches, and it taught me how to be a student athlete — how to act and things like that."

The memories still linger.

One of Oregon's greatest strengths this season is its depth, and Dion is the spark off the bench. Her career-high 10 points and six rebounds against Colorado on Nov. 24 helped the Ducks clinch their first road win of the season and thus proved how important her role to the team was.

"I don't really think about being a starter," Dion says. "Becoming a starter is like a gift. It comes when you're older and you've earned it. Coming off the bench makes you more focused because if [head coach Jody Runge] calls on you and you're not ready, you could lose the game for the team."

It's a new role for Dion, who was a starter in high school and who led Clovis West High School in Fresno, Calif., to three consecutive sectional championships. She was a three-time all-conference selection, and as a senior was the league's most valuable player. In 1997, The Fresno Bee named Dion the league's Player of the Year, and Clovis West labeled her its athlete of the year.

It has been Dion's work ethic both on and off the court that has defined her character. She was student body president and a member of the Inter-School Council during her senior year at Clovis West.

"There would be times when we were traveling during the summer, and of course Lindsey is taking a class for summer school," says Jose Hernandez, Dion's high school coach. "She would be in the hotel studying every free moment because she wanted to balance both and be good at

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"Dion brings great enthusiasm to the game."

Jody Runge
Oregon head coach

Lindsey Dion scored a career-high 10 points and grabbed six rebounds in the Ducks' 75-63 victory against Colorado on Nov. 24.

Matt Hankins/Emerald

Tyson back in court over assault charge

By Derrill Holly
The Associated Press

ROCKVILLE, Md. — Mike Tyson pleaded no contest Tuesday to misdemeanor assault, a decision that could return the former heavyweight champion to prison.

Although the plea to the two counts is not an admission of guilt, Tyson faces up to 20 years in prison — 10 years on each count — when he is sentenced early next year by a Maryland judge. He also could be fined up to \$2,500 on each count.

The charges stem from an Aug. 31 traffic accident in Montgomery County, Md., involving Tyson's wife, Monica. Tyson was accused of kicking and punching two motorists after the accident.

"You understand that this plea could affect your parole," Judge Steven Johnson told Tyson before accepting his plea.

"I'm truly aware of that," said Tyson, who was released from prison in 1995 after serving three years of six-year sentence for a 1992 rape conviction in Indiana.

Tyson, who is scheduled to fight Francois Botha on Jan. 16, would not discuss his case outside court.

It will be up to Indiana authorities to decide whether the no-contest pleas violated his probation.

By late Tuesday afternoon, Marion County (Ind.) Superior Court Judge Patricia Gifford had not heard from probation officials about Tyson, her clerk, Becky Wagner, said. She said probation officials would decide whether to request a violation hearing for Tyson.

George Walker, chief probation officer for Marion County, was out of the office until Wednesday.

Tyson told Johnson he did not expect leniency or a lighter sentence in return for entering the no-contest pleas.

The prosecutor urged that jail time be included in the punishment.

"The state opposes any probation before judgment," said Assistant State's Attorney Carol Crawford.

Tyson's lawyer, Paul Kemp, said the plea was an appropriate resolution to the case.

"Mr. Tyson certainly concedes that things occurred that were inappropriate," Kemp said.

Oregon volleyball looks to rebuild after disappointing season

By Allison Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

From the beginning, things were supposed to be different for this year's Oregon volleyball team. Gone were the demons of past seasons. At present was a freshman setter from Arizona and two senior captains, who seemed primed for a winning season.

Oregon head coach Cathy Nelson was finally coaching a group of her own recruits and the chemistry between the freshman class and the returning players seemed to be one the squad's biggest strengths.

"One of the most important things about this year is not to think about last year," Nelson said at the beginning of the season. "I do think that we all learned very valuable lessons last year."

And so with last year's dismal 9-21 record behind them, and a fresh outlook to this season, Nelson wasn't shy about what she wanted to accomplish with this team — an NCAA Tournament berth.

Oregon appeared to be on the right track when they opened conference play on Sept. 18 with a sweep of in-state rival Oregon State at MacArthur

Court. The Ducks followed the win with a non-conference victory against Cal State Fullerton on Sept. 23.

But the events that followed became eerily familiar to Nelson. Oregon dropped its next 11 matches, obliterating its chances to make an NCAA Tournament appearance.

Among those losses were teams that Oregon thought it clearly should have beaten, including California and Portland. And that, senior Madeline Ernst said, was the hardest part to swallow.

"The lowest part of the season was losing to teams we could have beaten," Ernst said. "The outcome of our record was disappointing, but overall, the returning players have bright futures."

It was not a season entirely of low points, however. For most of the season, Ernst led the Pacific-10 Conference by averaging more than five kills per game. That average also placed her second in the nation. Ernst was an all-American candidate and was a first-team all-Pac 10 selection at the end of the season.

Freshman setter Julie Gerlach also ranked in the top five of the Pac-10 for the entire season by averaging more than 13 assists per game. Gerlach received an honorable mention to the Pac-10's all-freshman team for her stellar freshman year.

Oregon's high point of the season came when the Ducks broke their 11-game losing streak by defeating No. 16 Arizona in Tucson on Oct. 30. It was the first time in Nelson's tenure that the Ducks knocked off a ranked opponent, and it proved that the Ducks could compete with the top teams in the conference.

Despite finishing the season with an 8-21 overall record and a 3-15 Pac-10 record and tied for eighth place, Oregon's players insisted this was a better team than its record showed.

"This season had its highs and lows," Ernst said. "We're disappointed that we didn't finish with a winning record or make it to the tournament, but we were able to knock off some games from top teams, and we achieved goals we didn't even set."

Which gives the Ducks even more promise for next season.



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