

Ducks hope to extend season

The women's tennis team is optimistic about reaching the postseason

By Mirjam Swanson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Seniors Shanelle Kaneshiro, Jaime Martin and Andrea Petrovic don't know whether their tennis careers at Oregon are finished or if they'll be playing in the NCAA Tournament next month.

Those three seniors — who have experienced their share of historical accomplishments and the most agonizing of setbacks with the women's tennis team — will have to wait until May 5 to find out.

"I definitely hope our season is not over," team captain Kaneshiro said. "But it's weird not knowing. It's hard to not know because you don't know if you should relax now that the season's over, or not."

Adding to their uncertainty is the new format for this season's tournament selection process. For the first time, all of the nation's conference champions will receive automatic bids to the 64-team tournament — just as the NCAA basketball field is set.

So, although the Ducks finished the season ranked No. 50,

clearly making them one of the top-64 squads in the country, it's unlikely that there will be room for them at the tournament after all of the conference champs are seeded.

"I really don't think we're going to make it," head coach Jack Griffin said. "We're definitely on the bubble, but I don't know what criteria they're going to use."

"We have not finished strong, so I'm sure they'll look at that. But we have not lost to a team that wasn't in the top 35, and we have beaten two top-20 teams. So, I just don't know."

After beating then-No. 27 Washington for the first time in its history, Oregon received its highest ranking ever in January. But since then the Ducks have struggled, losing eight of their last nine matches and dropping 19 spots in the standings.

Although Oregon probably won't be invited to the tournament, the Ducks still plan to practice and prepare with the hope that they're asked.

"We have a plan to meet Thursday," Griffin said. "We'll start

something then. But it's like we're sort of in the twilight zone, we don't know."

Unlikely as an Oregon appearance may seem, the team — so severely debilitated by numerous injuries last season — remains optimistic about its chances.

"I think we will get in," Kaneshiro said, "or I'm hoping we will. Whatever happens, happens. It would be great to get back there after everything we went through last year. But we just have to wait and see."

While they're waiting, plenty is going on for the Ducks. They're recovering from the difficult Pacific-10 Championships last weekend, catching up scholastically and celebrating the birthdays of two of their teammates — junior Alina Wygonowska and redshirt freshman Sarah Colistro. They'll definitely also be hoping that Colistro's May 3 knee surgery is successful.

And they'll be keeping their fingers crossed that the seniors' careers aren't done just yet.

"I'm really hoping we do it," freshman Valerie Young said. "More than anything I want us to go for our seniors. It would be such a great feeling."



Avalanche looks to bury San Jose

By John Mossman
The Associated Press

DENVER — Home-ice advantage finally kicks in this week for the Colorado Avalanche, who find themselves in a favorable position: They lead San Jose 2-0 with the next three games at home.

Favorable, but not unscalable. The Avalanche postponed the first two games of the first-round NHL series last week out of respect for the shooting tragedy at a suburban Denver high school. They opened in San Jose, where they beat the Sharks 3-1 in Saturday's opener and 2-1 in overtime

Monday night.

Returning home for Games 3 and 4 on Wednesday and Friday — and a Game 5 in Denver on Saturday if necessary — the Avalanche are cognizant of the pitfalls of thinking this series is just about over.

Rookie right wing Milan Hejduk, whose goal at 7:53 of overtime gave Colorado the win Monday night, said, "It's great to win two in a row and be back home. It's the best situation."

Wiser heads urged caution. "Our attitude hasn't changed," goaltender Patrick Roy said Tues-

day. "We have to take every game one at a time. We remember last year when we were up 3-1 in the first round [against Edmonton] and had two of our last three games at home. We lost them all."

"So Game 3 is a huge game for us. It's the only game that matters right now. I haven't heard anybody talking about not wanting to go back to San Jose [for Game 6]. All I know is we have to win four games, and until we do the series is not over."

Colorado captain Joe Sakic insisted it is "still going to be a tough series. They've got a gritty hockey club. We can't take anything for granted."

Yeater

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getting aching legs and everything. I've never had leg problems before."

Shortly after Yeater realized her leg problems, she made a challenge to herself.

"I said, 'Enough of this. I don't need to be stressed out running these times.'"

That was about three weeks ago.

"Now, I'm eating healthier, and I'm staying away from the dorm food," Yeater said. "I'm working hard, and sometimes I might go out and do a little extra jogging."

Assistant coach Mark Stream has coached Yeater since her arrival at Oregon, and he has noticed the recent change in Yeater's attitude.

"She has always tried hard, but she is starting to recognize that certain things need to be done in

all aspects of her training," Stream said. "She is recognizing that there are more things to do to get everything going in the same direction."

"She is an incredibly strong person and she is very dynamic. In time, she will provide a benchmark to others on the team with her explosiveness."

Certainly on the track, she is a leader by example. She will grow into a leadership role over time, but she is just a freshman now."

Despite her difficulties, Yeater has not written off the possibility of a successful season. Her goals are to have her times in the 100 down to the 11-second range this season, and she wants to cut her times for

the 200 closer to 23 seconds.

In the future, she would like to be an All-American and is confident she has what it takes to get there — if she works hard.

"I learned that there are a lot of people out there who are better than me, and I'm going to have to work really hard to do what I want to do," Yeater said.

"I have goals to do all this stuff, and the only way I see myself being able to achieve my goals is if I work hard and do what I need to do to get there."

Most of all, though, Yeater has learned to support herself.

"I think it's made me stronger mentally. I'm a lot better at dealing with responsibilities since I got here, and I'm handling change better," Yeater said. "I'm not as stressed out to be as I used to be because I'm getting used to it now."



YEATER

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