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Expectations grow for women's tennis

■ With better doubles play, the Oregon women's tennis team could have its best season yet

By Matt O'Neill
for the Emerald

The buzz word around the Oregon women's tennis program is injuries — or lack thereof. One of the biggest concerns for head coach Jack Griffin during the last couple seasons has been the injury bug.

For the last two seasons, some of the Duck's key players have been injured, including Sarah Colistro and Alina Wygonowska.

"Last year, [Alina] had lots of nagging injuries," Griffin said. "There was probably only a two-week span where she was completely healthy. This year there are moments where she is back to where she was; one of the best in the Pacific-10 Conference."

Griffin sees flashes of the player who was ranked as high as No. 35 in the nation two years ago. If she can completely return to her old form, the senior will provide leadership at the top of the singles lineup.

Other players who look to be playing at the top of the singles lineup for Griffin this season are sophomore Janice Nyland and freshman Amy Juppenlatz. Both are off to good starts this fall.

"Amy and Janice are right where they should be," Griffin said. "They are playing very well right now."

Along with Juppenlatz, another newcomer, Monika Gieczys, is showing that she will also be a big part of the team this season.

"Monika has shown that she

will have an impact on our team," Griffin said. "She is playing well despite her down-time."

Gieczys was not able to participate in the first tournament because of difficulty obtaining her visa.

Sophomore Valerie Young has also gotten off to a great start in her second campaign as a Duck.

"Val is playing her best tennis at Oregon yet," Griffin said. "She should be in the top six before the year is out."

The coaching staff would like to see doubles play improve.

Right now the feeling is that Oregon can compete against the nation's best in singles. But once the Ducks better their doubles play, they feel that they will be a force to be reckoned with.

"We need better doubles play to compete with the top 15 or 20 teams," Griffin said. "Right now we have players playing singles while they are on the doubles court. Once we get them to change that, then we'll be ready to compete."

Overall, the coaches are very happy with the team is performing right now, and have great expectations for the prospects of the season.

"Right now, it is hard for us to tell, especially since we are not competing a lot," Griffin said. "But we are happy because on paper it looks like this is the best team we've had in a long time."



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Rugby ready to rumble

■ The Oregon Club Sports women's rugby team begins its season on a positive note with a win at home

By Shigenari Matsumoto
for the Emerald

The Oregon Club Sports women's rugby team (1-1), defeated Lewis and Clark 61-5 in its first home game of the season last Saturday.

In front of a crowd about 30 fans at the grass intramural field behind McArthur Court, the Ducks had nine tries and held Lewis and Clark to one.

"The players played wonderfully today," said Oregon coach Sean Peters. "They ran the ball well and were able to keep the ball moving. Most importantly, they were all in good shape."

Peters, who plays on the Eugene men's club team, coached the team last year in its first season.

The Oregon club started from scratch, without even a single ball. The Ducks won only two games and tied one.

They lost their first match this season, 27-14, to a Portland senior women's team on Oct. 16. But the match gave the rookies much-needed confidence.

At the end of last season, several Ducks went to Reno, Nev., to play friendly matches, and four players traveled to Missoula, Mont., to play in the Maggotfest Tournament. They played on teams that were missing players due to injury, a friendly tradition

in rugby. This year, Oregon plans a trip to Montana as a team.

"We have improved a lot compared to last year," said Peters.

He said that the team is aiming for the Collegiate National Championship Tournament, the biggest

tournament for club rugby teams.

"We have [some] of the best talent in the league," Peters said.

"I think we have a good chance."

The key players of the team are Kelsey Christianson who plays wing, Jamie Hampton, who plays scrumhalf and Kristina Skogen, who is the eight-man.

Kelsey, a freshman from Woodville, Wash., had six tries Saturday, and scored more than half of the Ducks' points — the most she's ever scored.

"I like rugby because the pace is fast and exciting," said Kelsey. "I am addicted to it."

Kelsey hopes to go to nationals and to play for the Grizzlies, which is "the best team on the West Coast."

The Pacific Coast Grizzlies is a territorial-level team, belonging to one of the eight divisions in the USA Rugby Union.

Both Peter and Kelsey hope rugby will gain popularity.

It will help if the Ducks can reach the nationals this year. With the experienced squad and the promising recruits, it could happen.

