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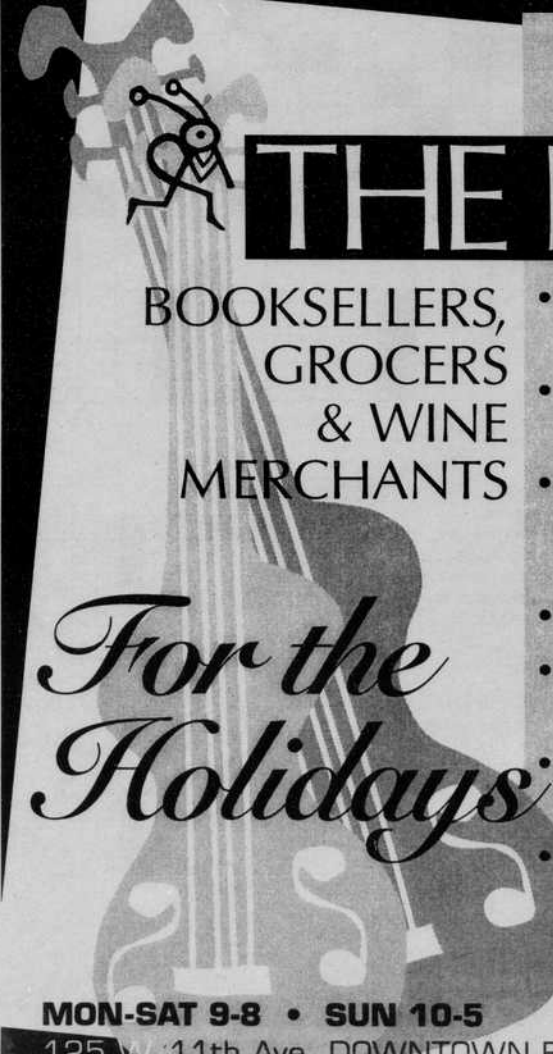
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## Volleyball

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feel we had a successful season in terms of our commitment, desire and leadership. When I got here 10 months ago, I can't say those things were here."

The Ducks opened the season by winning six of their first seven matches, but were knocked back after three tough losses to begin Pac-10 play. All three contests were decided in the fifth game and could have gone either way.

"We had those close matches in the beginning of the year, and unfortunately they didn't go our way for some reason or another," junior setter Julie Gerlach said. "Although our record may not show it, we've accomplished a lot this year. Our mentality and how we present ourselves has changed. We now have pride in the things we do."

On occasion, flashes of brilliance made one wonder why victories came so hard for the Ducks — such was the case in the team's first conference win of the season, a 3-0 sweep at Oregon State. The loss to Arizona State on Oct. 6, however, showed why the Ducks finished tied-for-ninth place in the Pac-10. As a unit, the Ducks hit just .087 in that match.

"We're like a golfer with a bad swing," Ferreira said. "You don't hit a 70 with only two buckets of balls. It takes an unbelievable amount of reps to be at game speed."

"Are we going to attack it? Absolutely."

With Ferreira's 4-2 Flex offensive scheme now comfortably in place, the Ducks can concentrate their efforts on improving specific areas. In particular, Ferreira said that better skill-development methods must be implemented during winter and spring sessions in order for the Ducks to make a trip to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1989.

"We got to a point where the skill level was not where it needed to be to succeed in this conference," Ferreira said. "We grew drastically in a lot of areas, and I feel comfortable and confident in this team. But I'm not satisfied. We have a lot of work to do."

With the focus now on developing individual skills, the Ducks are eager to get to work in the off-season.

"We're really excited about the postseason," Gerlach said. "It's go-

ing to be a little different — we're going to focus on volleyball aspects instead of just conditioning."

For the 2001 campaign, the Ducks will have five players with experience in the starting lineup. Junior Monique Tobbagi, a Pac-10 honorable mention player who led the team with 3.81 kills per game, will be the focal point of the team's offensive attack. Gerlach and sophomore Sydney Chute (who led the team with 6.41 assists per game) will get the ever-so-important setting duties.

"We know we can do it," Chute said. "We have confidence in the coaching staff and each other. We just have to prove what we can do."

To replace the holes in the starting lineup created by the departure of seniors Amy Banducci and Halie Mazza, Oregon's young squad will have to rely heavily on middle blockers Alisha Stevens and Amanda Porter. The return of sophomore Nicole Allen, who missed nearly the entire season with a knee injury, will also provide some height and experience at the net. Lindsay Murphy, one of five freshmen on the team this season, and sophomore Kristin Ferris will provide the team with good ball control as returning starters.

With such great chemistry, Ferreira said his first year at Oregon was the most fun he has had in his seven years of coaching, even though it is his only losing year.


"There are so many positives at Oregon and in the volleyball program — it is on fire," said the coach, who has compiled an overall record of 158-75. "These kids are stimulated and motivated. They left their hearts on the floor and played so hard all year."

With only one thing — winning — on their minds for the next nine months, the Ducks' dreams of becoming more than just competitors may come true.

"We've established a strong foundation for this program ... and we have to make sure we're on track for our three- to five-year plan," Ferreira said.

And if the Ducks improve their physical play in the next three years as much as they improved the mental side of their game in the

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