



What UO women need is so close, yet so far away



PEZ SEZ

SCOTT PESZNECKER

Imagine how it feels when you're running a high fever — that hot-then-cold feeling when the world spins, your head aches and your muscles feel empty. Now, imagine that you're holding an antidote. "Take one swig," the bottle reads, "and that sickly feeling will melt away."

There's just one problem. You can't pop the lid off the darn bottle.

After four straight losses, it's obvious that the Oregon women's basketball team isn't in good health right now, mentally or physically.

Three of the Ducks' five seniors sustained injuries. Heads must be aching, as inexperienced players are not dealing well with more playing time. From what's transpired on the court this season, "disorientation" could be another symptom of Oregon's illness.

No doubt, the Ducks' stomachs must still be doing somersaults. That roller-coaster drop from first to sixth in the Pacific-10 Conference would make my insides churn.

But, even if it's no longer ranked in the top-25 polls, you keep watching this Oregon team. Perhaps you're feeling sick too, because you see the seams fraying, and you can almost feel the pain the Ducks endure with each loss.

And you're frustrated, very frustrated, because you know that a possible antidote is oh-so-close.

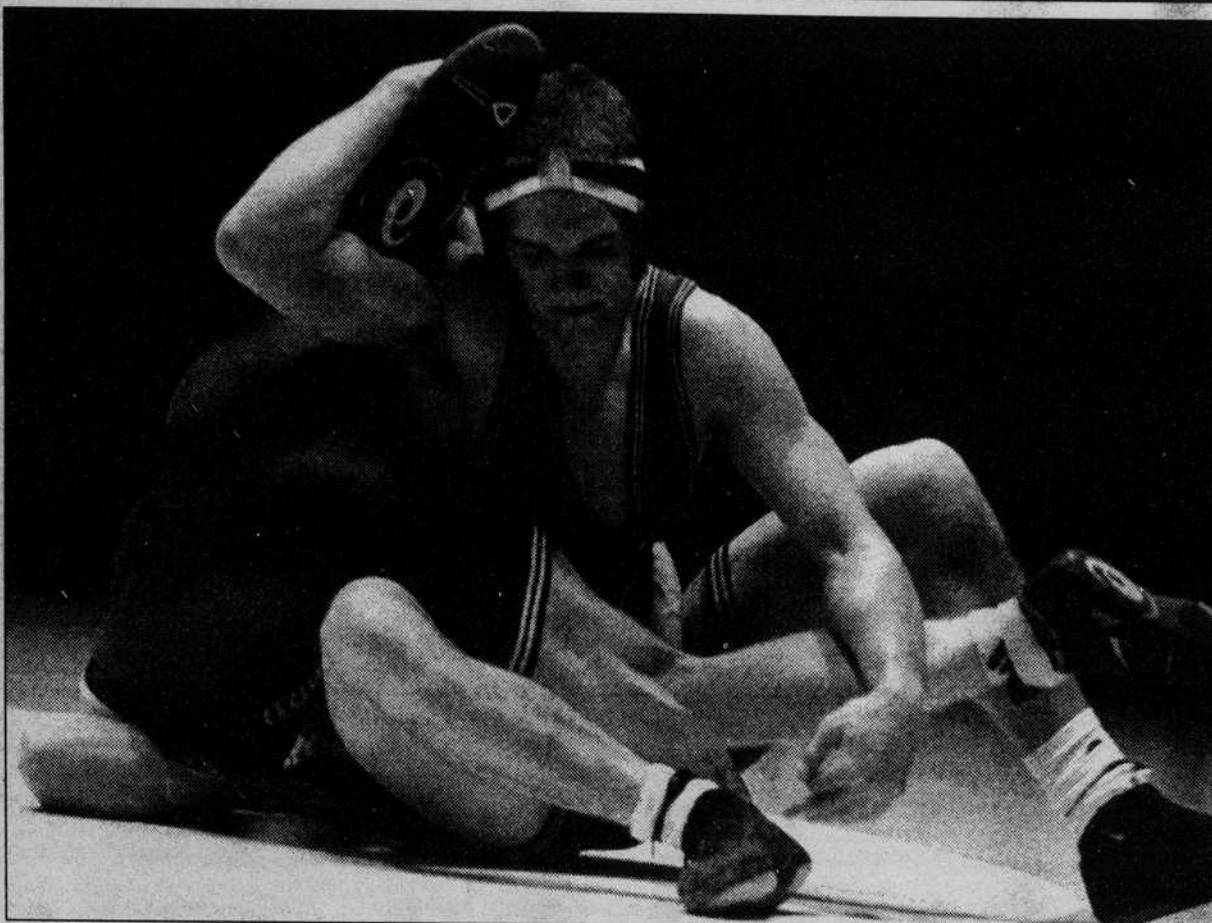
She's sitting right there during home games, on the left side of the bench, decked out in trendy street clothes. And when the Ducks are looking for that late push to topple Southern California in the fourth quarter, you are waiting for her to jump out of her seat, whirl around a few times, and suddenly be donning a gleaming-white Oregon uniform — complete with black high-tops, wristbands and a headband, of course — and you want her to save the day.

There's just one problem. She can't.

"I wouldn't risk a year of eligibility for that," junior point guard Shaquala Williams said, brushing aside the possibility of a late-season return. "I think my future right now is more important than trying to save the season."

Williams says she is about "80 percent" healthy from a torn anterior cruciate ligament that she suffered in September. She claims she can run and cut as fast as she ever

Turn to Pesznecker, page 10



Azle Malinao-Alvarez Emerald

Oregon sophomore Tony Overstake played a major role in Oregon's earlier victory against the Oregon State Beavers at McArthur Court.

Oregon prepares for Civil War

■ The Ducks and the Beavers tangle for the second time this season in a crucial Pac-10 match

By Robbie McCallum
Oregon Daily Emerald

There is no love lost between these two teams.

In the oldest wrestling rivalry in the state, the Oregon and Oregon State wrestling teams get down to business at 7 p.m. today at Gill Coliseum in Corvallis.

"The Civil War is always intense," Oregon head coach Chuck Kearney said. "This is our time of focus and prepara-

tion, but we're always going to get up for Oregon State."

The No. 17 ranked Ducks (7-7 overall, 4-3 Pacific-10 Conference) look to make a season sweep of the No. 15 Beavers (10-7, 6-2) for the first time since 1996 and only the eighth time in 47 years.

Oregon defeated the favored Beavers 22-16 on Dec. 13 for the first time since 1997.

"We're looking forward to the rematch," Oregon State coach Joe Wells said. "It's the last dual meet of the year, and it's only fitting to get out and try to take it to these guys."

Much has changed, however, since earlier in the season. The

Ducks are the losers of their last four matches and have dropped from No. 10 to No. 17 in the national polls.

Oregon State had dropped to No. 18 in the polls but is back up to 15th following wins over Cal State-Bakersfield and Fullerton State.

Every match is crucial, as was proved in the earlier Civil War. Junior Shaun Williams has three decisions this season over Oregon State's No. 9 Nathan Navarro at 125 pounds, as does sophomore Eric Webb over Beaver heavy-weight Jason Cooley. Webb's match-opening pin of Cooley

Turn to Wrestling, page 10

« The Civil War is always intense. Chuck Kearney head coach »

Slumping Ducks choose to view bright side of what's left



Senior Bryan Bracey (42) knows his career is winding down and wants "to end it with a bang."

■ The UO men look ahead instead of agonize over their frustrating Pac-10 season thus far

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

It's not a lovely feeling for these Oregon Ducks to be stuck in the lower half of the conference standings and think about what might have been.

Oregon (12-9 overall, 3-8 Pacific-10 Conference) had high hopes heading into league play, but thanks to eight losses in its past 10 games, it finds itself in a three-way tie for sixth place.

The players' frustration is understandable, considering the fact that the Ducks were 9-1 before winning their conference opener against Oregon State. That winning feeling is long gone, but the players know that they still have seven games left to snag a spot in the NIT.

"It's hard because I know that if we got to start our year over, then we'd be

much better," said senior forward Bryan Bracey, who is second in the Pac-10 in scoring with 18.6 points per game. "We're at the point now where we can't afford to lose any more ball-games. We've got seven left that will determine our postseason."

The Ducks didn't practice Monday and had a shortened practice Tuesday, in hopes of refreshing their bodies and minds before their upcoming road trip north to face Washington State Thursday and Washington Saturday.

The attitude Tuesday was surprisingly upbeat for a team in a slump, but as junior Freddie Jones put it, "it's all about having fun again."

"We figure for us to get back on track, we gotta have some fun," Jones said. "Of course we're disappointed, but we're not making so much out of the disappointment. When we're out having fun, that means we're winning games and enjoying each other."

Turn to Basketball, page 10

« We're at the point now where we can't afford to lose any more ball games. We've got seven left that will determine our postseason. Bryan Bracey senior forward »