

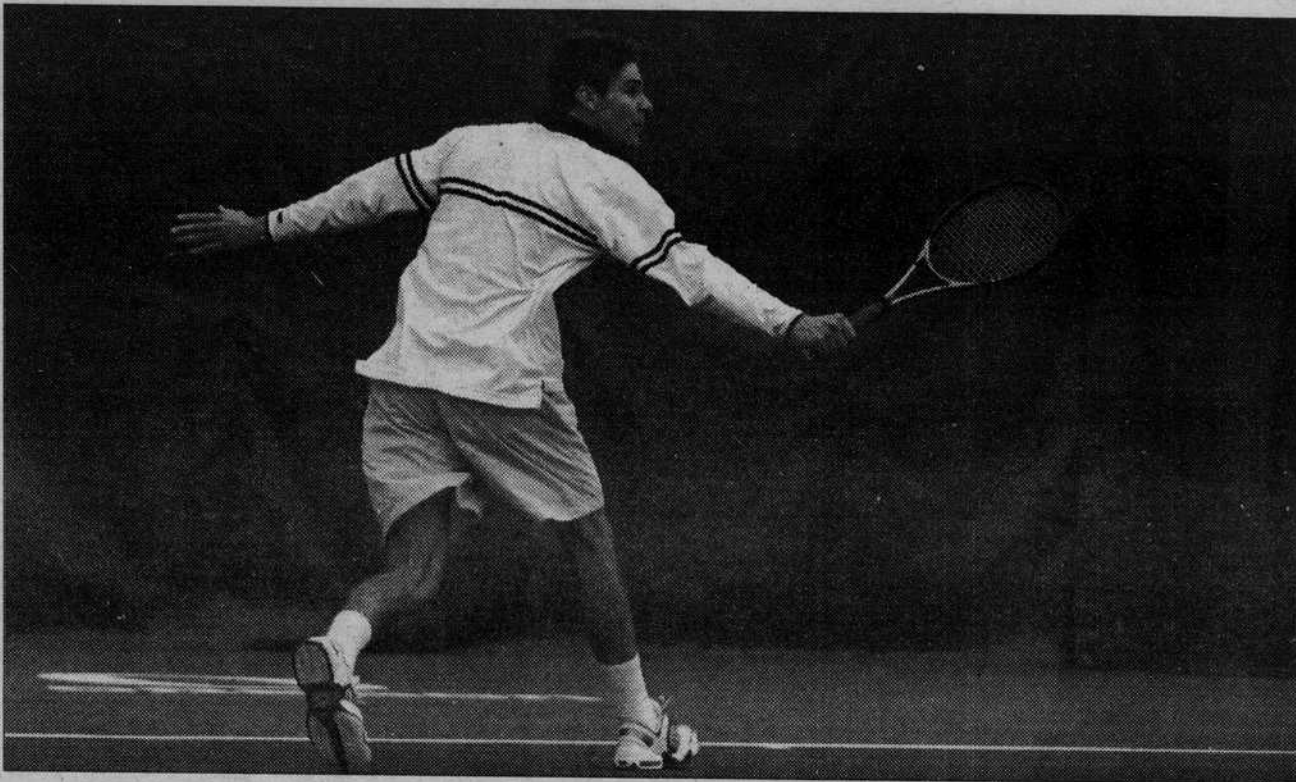
SPORTS

Thursday

Best Bet

NBA Playoffs, Game 5: Dallas at Utah
6 p.m., TNT

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The Oregon men's tennis team will only lose senior David Becker to graduation, while seven other players will return next year.

Emerald

Men's tennis team looks to future

■ A tough season for the Oregon men's tennis team has the Ducks looking toward a more successful future

By Robbie McCallum
Oregon Daily Emerald

Most teams wouldn't call an 8-13 season — in which it lost the final seven matches of the year — a success.

But considering that the Oregon men's tennis team consisted of five freshmen, two sophomores and a senior who have played together for only two months, the season was a triumphant victory.

After graduating three starters from a 12-10 NCAA qualifying team, head coach

Chris Russell knew he would field a young team for the 2000-01 season. He just didn't realize how young.

The Ducks experienced their biggest loss of the season before they even took to the courts. Projected ace Thomas Schneider, who would be a junior, and No. 4 starter Leslie Eisinga decided to leave the team. Schneider withdrew from school and went to his home in Worb, Switzerland, while Eisinga transferred to Nevada-Las Vegas.

"Thomas was a tremendous loss," Russell said. "He embodied what we were trying to accomplish. That was a hole that was evident this year. In time we will have that back in the program."

The departures left Russell scrambling to find replacements for the Ducks to even field a complete team. In addition to recruits Buck Mink and Chris King, Russell

brought in a trio of European freshmen to shore up the Oregon roster. After an entire fall with only five players, Swedish player Martin Pawlowski, French player Greg Dubourdieu and Ukrainian Alexander Druzenko joined the team in early January, just in time for the regular season.



RUSSELL

The team's youth, coupled with playing in one of the nation's toughest conferences, made for a rough season. The Ducks finished eighth in the Pacific-10 Conference with an 0-7 conference record. Every team excluding Oregon finished the regular season ranked in the top 40.

Oregon's top veteran was sophomore Oded Teig, who played No. 3 for the Ducks as a freshman.

"We were hoping he'd be challenged at the top, and he was," Russell said. "Playing as high as he did and coming out with a winning record is a real credit to Oded. We feel real positive about him in the future."

Teig finished the season with a team-leading 21-17 record to push his career total to 43 wins, just four shy of the Oregon top-10 list. The Holon, Israel, native scored major upsets over Arizona State's No. 69-ranked Nic Dubey and Washington's No. 42 Matt Hanlin. Teig will return next season as one of the top players in the conference.

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Moos selects interim coach

■ Dan Muscatell, the team's recruiting coordinator for the past two seasons, will lead the team until a permanent replacement for Runge is found

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

Dan Muscatell was named the interim head coach of the women's basketball team Wednesday after Jody Runge resigned from the position Monday.



MUSCATELL

Muscatell, who has been an assistant coach the past two seasons and has worked primarily as the recruiting coordinator, said he has not decided if he will apply to be Runge's full-time successor. He did, however, reportedly interview Tuesday for an assistant position at Oregon State.

Several Ducks mentioned Muscatell as their favorite candidate for the head coaching job.

Athletic Director Bill Moos expects a large pool of candidates to apply for the vacant position before the May 21 deadline.

Muscatell, 41, said he and the other two assistants — Fred Litzenger and Kirsten McKnight — will continue to keep the team in check until a new coach is found.

"It's really important for people to understand it's a temporary position," Muscatell said. "It does not change the function of our staff members. We're going to continue to work together to move the program in a positive direction."

Moos said one of his main concerns was dealing with the recruits. Six high school players signed letters of intent to join the squad next season.

"I felt it was important at this time to have some leadership in position as we work with current players and continue communication with incoming recruits," Moos said. "Because of his role as the program's primary recruiter as well as his rapport with the current players, Dan became the obvious choice."

"All three assistants will be in charge of different areas within the program, with Dan overseeing the entire operation at this time."

Runge led the Ducks to eight straight NCAA Tournament appearances while compiling the best winning percentage of any coach in school history. She resigned after two months of turmoil, which included a players' meeting with Moos and an investigation of the program by a Kansas City-based law firm.

University President Dave Frohnmayer said Wednesday that it was "gratifying" to have both sides come to an agreement and resolve the issue. Runge, who had two years remaining on a \$140,000 contract, and the Athletic Department agreed to a half-million dollar settlement.

Runge said Tuesday that the report handed in by Bond, Schoenck & King was not the reason for her departure.

The University is still debating whether it will make the report public. Frohnmayer said there are several "significant" issues that will have to be dealt with before a decision is made.

The University may send the report to the state attorney general's office, who could then make a decision, Frohnmayer said.

Improving Duck women 'hoping to peak at right time'

■ As the season progresses, the Ducks are honing their craft and aiming for higher marks

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

Each week, the press release for the Oregon women's track and field team includes a list of the Ducks' season bests from the weekend before.

Each week, that list gets larger. From top to bottom, the Oregon athletes are improving their marks in every meet they participate in. Now, the only challenge for the Ducks is to raise those marks slightly and start qualifying for the NCAA Championships at Hayward Field May 30-June 2.

The Ducks have only five athletes on the NCAA provisional or NCAA

automatic lists, the least number of athletes of any Pacific-10 Conference school. That number may be deceiving because the Pac-10 is one of the deepest track and field conferences in the country.

"We're struggling a little bit with injuries right now but hoping to improve our marks," freshman javelin-throwing standout Sarah Malone said. "We're hoping to peak at the right time."

The good news for Oregon? Those five Ducks that have qualified are high on their respective lists. Malone is third nationally in the javelin, Mary Etter is fifth in the discus and Niki Reed is eighth in the pole vault. Hanna Smedstad is 20th nationally in the 10,000, but she has qualified for the NCAA Championships for four straight years.

Some of the Oregon athletes will have a chance to raise their marks once again at the Steve Scott Invitational in

Irvine, Calif., on Sunday. Ducks head coach Tom Heinonen will take a contingent of 16 athletes to the meet, including Etter and Reed. Smedstad will run in the 5,000 at the Cardinal Invitational Friday. Eri Macdonald will also compete Friday.

You'd think she was a senior

Sarah Malone is knocking down the records — and the opposition — like bowling pins. The freshman set a school record in the javelin toss last week at the Oregon Invitational, and is confident in her ability to win the Pac-10 title in the event.

"I want to take that throw from last weekend and build on that," Malone said.

The Newberg native said that while breaking the record was nice, her next goal is to break the old school record of 202-3. Malone's record of 169-3 is with the new implement, which has

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Tom Patterson Emerald

Sarah Malone and the Ducks hope to raise their standing this Sunday.