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Two blockers hit century in Ducks' win

■ Juniors Stephanie Martin and Lindsay Closs became the first Oregon tandem since 1993 to record 100 blocks each

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

Not since 1993 has Oregon seen more consistent defensive play from its players than it has this season. And it's beginning to pay off.

In Oregon's 3-1 victory over Portland on Tuesday — the Ducks' first since Sept. 8 — junior Stephanie Martin became the first Duck since Alli White in 1996 to top the century mark in blocks. Her four against Portland on Tuesday gave her 104 for the season.

With 10 blocks against the Pilots, Closs joined Martin with 109 blocks of her own, and looks to

better her 125 total blocks earned last season at Fresno State with five matches left to play.

The tandem's feat marks the first time the Ducks have had two players with more than 100 blocks in a season since 1993, when Karissa Meith and Angee Henderson roamed McArthur Court.

"When you consider that total blocks translate to points, that's huge," head coach Carl Ferreira said.

Stepping up

Not since Heather Gilmore's early-season injury had the Ducks been at such a loss as when Martin had to sit out against Stanford last Friday. The junior has been playing with back spasms for most of the season, and they finally caught up to her in the match against California.

"I don't know if back spasms made her injure her knee, but she was definitely favoring it (on Thursday)," Ferreira said.

Martin returned with a vengeance against Portland, rack-

ing up 12 kills and four blocks. But Ferreira said she may find outside hitter as her destination. She normally starts as a middle blocker, but the lateral movement required by the position would put too much pressure on her already brittle knee, further exposing it to injury.

But if she isn't ready to go in the future, the Ducks aren't worried. Oregon has the parts to fill in, and did so against Stanford.

"I'm proud of (Amanda) Porter, who stepped in and took responsibility to fill that role," Tobbagi said.

"I think Lauren (Westendorf) did a good job, I think Porter came in and stepped up, and so did Heather," Ferreira said. "The culmination of those three players helped alleviate the absence of Martin."

Westendorf, Porter and Gilmore combined for 19 kills and 16 digs against Stanford.

The place was rockin'

The Ducks couldn't have asked for a better setting Friday. No. 4

Stanford was in town, and a season-high crowd of 1,863 showed up. The match followed a women's basketball exhibition game, which saw more than 4,000 patrons pass through the McArthur Court turnstiles. With almost half staying to see the Ducks challenge Stanford, the total represented the ninth-highest in McArthur history for volleyball, and the most since 1996, when 3,716 witnessed Oregon upset then-No. 21 Oregon State.

"I'm all about piggybacking where you need to piggyback," Ferreira said. "I think it's a great idea to have a doubleheader."

Keeping those fans in the seats may have been the biggest problem for the Ducks, with the crowd topping 1,000 at McArthur for only the second time this season. However, there was no problem getting up for the match.

"It was incredible," Tobbagi said. "The crowd gave us a good advantage. I'm very proud to be on this team.."

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Moore

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Those noises just can't seem to escape the fresh-faced 18-year-old's mind.

"Ahh!" said Moore while lifting both hands in demonstration of the crowd. "The adrenaline was flowing, and you hear all 46,000 people cheering. Ahh! It's wonderful. It's a great feeling."

"I wanted to separate him from the ball, and I didn't, but I got him good, though," he said.

The tackle was the first of three Moore recorded in the game, a career high for the man who now has recorded eight on the year while playing in every contest.

"Stevie's doing a great job and making plays," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "The more and more he plays, the better he gets."

Moore's soaking in every moment while being the backup to senior Rashad Bauman, who Moore said is like another coach, and has filled in nicely when needed. For example, the reason he played much of the third quarter against the Sun Devils was that Bauman

had a bad reaction to anti-inflammatory medicine and was throwing up at halftime.

So for Moore, the satisfaction of keeping things afloat while Bauman was away and making big plays in the process gave him a feeling of "having arrived."



MOORE

"I didn't give up any big plays and held my own, and that feels good and gives the coaches confidence in me," Moore said. "You kind of get that confidence going. Like, you always knew

you could do it, but when you actually just get out there and do it, the confidence starts rolling, ya know?"

"I can't even explain it, but I like it," he said.

And Bauman has liked what he's seen out of his pupil.

"Stevie's good, there's no hiding that fact," Bauman said. "He's a lot like me."

One of the similarities the two share is that they both hail from

California. In fact, 60 players on the Ducks played high school football in the state, giving this week's game a little extra flavor and providing those players some added motivation to want to have a good game.

Moore, who grew up following Southern California more than UCLA, is one of many Ducks who wanted to play college ball for one of the two L.A. schools, but such an opportunity never knocked.

"Yeah, it's kind of like, let's prove them wrong and go out there and show them what we can do," Moore said. "You know, we got a little chip on our shoulders and we're going to go down there and try to bang them up a little bit. That's what it's all about."

And playing in games with as much magnitude as Oregon-UCLA this Saturday is what college football's all about.

"Yup yup, the Rose Bowl, 90,000 people, ABC. It's on. Oh man, is it going to be on," Moore said.

His smile will be too.

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