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Tennis teams start off hot

■ In a busy weekend of action, both the men's and women's tennis teams go undefeated to start the regular season

By Peter Martini for the Emerald

The Oregon women's tennis team swept a busy weekend against Santa Clara, Northern Arizona and Idaho.

Against Idaho, the Ducks won five out of six singles matches and all three doubles matches.

Davina Mendiburu and Courtney Nagle trailed their doubles match, 5-3, before winning the next five games to win the match 8-5.

"We started out really slow," Nagle said. "But we decided to wake up and we cleaned up our errors."

Oregon's No. 1 doubles team, Janice Nyland and Monika Gieczys, won easily, 8-1. Adeline Arnaud and Ester Bak defeated Idaho's Pooja Deshmukh/Zelijka Vidic, 8-5.

The singles matches created some late excitement. Down 5-4 in the third set, Mendiburu overcame a 40-0 deficit to even it up at 5-5. She then handily won the next two games to win the set 7-5 over Idaho's Barbora Kudlikova.

"It's tough to face a triple-match-point and come out on top. It was a gutsy performance," assistant coach Nils Schyllander said. "She lost her concentration in the second set and early in the third and made it harder for herself. But in the end, she competed like a champion."

Gieczys lost the only singles match of the weekend for the Ducks, and it was a tough one to take. She led 5-1 in the third set and had the match-point in the seventh game. But Idaho's Deshmukh battled back to win the final six games to pull off the 7-5 upset.

"Monika became defensive and went away from her game plan. It's a tough loss for her," head coach Jack Griffin said. "But she's a junior and she has great support from her teammates, so I think she'll be able to put it behind her and play well for us."

Overall, the weekend was very productive for the Ducks as they won 17 of 18 singles matches, won all nine doubles matches and increased their record to 4-0.

Oregon has next weekend off, but then faces Loyola Marymount, San Diego and San Diego State on Feb. 8-10. The Ducks lost to all three schools last season.

"We finally get a chance for some payback against all three," Nyland said. "It's been on my mind for a year."

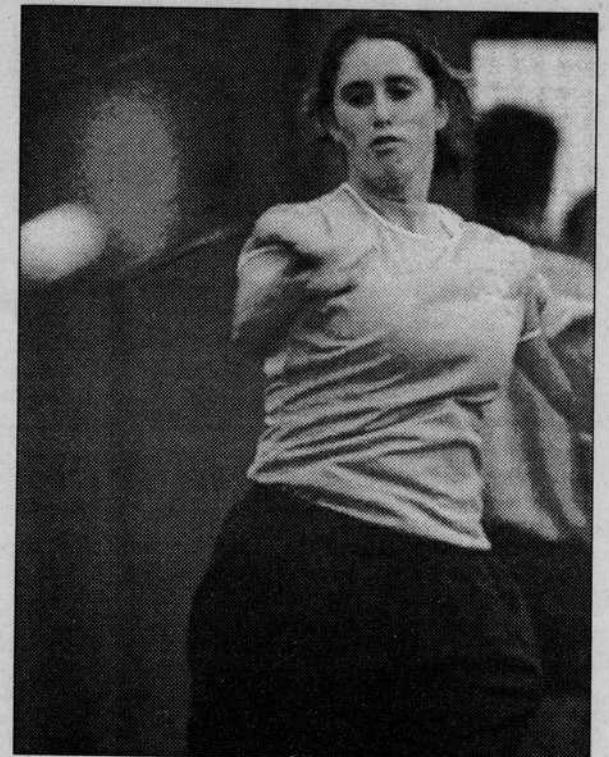
Griffin said he is pleased by the way the team improved throughout the weekend, but he still wants to find a solid No. 3 doubles team before the trip down to California.

"We have three players that can play in the third doubles team, so we're still figuring out who plays together the best," Griffin said. "Winning that first point before singles is so crucial against the better teams in the nation."

Men slam Idaho, Northern Arizona

The Oregon men's tennis team breezed through the weekend over Northern Arizona and Idaho to start the regular season 2-0.

The Ducks beat Idaho on Sunday 7-0, not losing a set in singles.



Adam Amato Emerald

Davina Mendiburu and the Oregon women's tennis team began the regular season with three wins this season.

Oregon also swept the three doubles matches.

"We've been getting better throughout the practices and we showed it this weekend," head coach Chris Russell said. "We also played better in doubles today against Idaho than we played against Northern Arizona."

Oded Tieg and Sven Swinnen won their doubles match, 8-4. The doubles teams of Jason Menke and Manuel Kost and Johan Paalberg and Chris King won their matches, 8-2 each.

"They are stepping it up right now," Russell said. "They are not losing their focus against weaker competition and that's important because (Brigham Young University) will be very tough next week."

In the 6-1 victory Friday over Northern Arizona, the Ducks started slowly in doubles, but still won all three matches, 8-5, 8-4, 8-5.

"We did struggle a little bit in our doubles," Tieg said. "But it wasn't really that difficult to win."

The only singles match Oregon lost during the weekend was Swinnen's loss to Northern Arizona's Jonathon John, 7-6, 2-6, 7-6.

Russell said Swinnen struggled, but it was important for him to get a match under his belt.

The Ducks' competition will get much tougher as they will play BYU and Washington at home next weekend.

"We showed we're not set yet in doubles," Russell said. "But they came together in the end and it was important to get these matches under our belt because we have some really tough matches coming up."

Peter Martini is a freelance reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald.

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Sports brief

Patriots, Rams to meet in Super Bowl

PITTSBURGH — They weren't supposed to win their division. They weren't supposed to be one of the last four teams standing. And they sure weren't supposed to make the Super Bowl.

Now that the New England Patriots have done all that, they kindly request that you continue to insult them.

The Patriots used two quarterbacks and two touchdowns by their special teams to beat the favored Pittsburgh Steelers, 24-17, in Sunday's AFC Championship game. The Patriots are going to Super Bowl XXXVI. An eager nation expects the St. Louis Rams to beat them by 14 touchdowns.

Drew Bledsoe subbed for an injured Tom Brady and threw for 102 yards and a touchdown. Brady had taken over for an injured Bledsoe three months ago. Patriots coach Bill Belichick said he would wait until later in the week to name a Super Bowl starter.

— Michael Rosenberg
Knight Ridder newspapers