

# UO women's tennis opens Pac-10 play

■ The Ducks host No. 7 Arizona State and No. 44 Arizona this weekend

By Peter Martini  
for the Emerald

After going 6-1 in nonconference play, the Oregon women's tennis team opens the Pacific-10 Conference schedule this weekend.

The Ducks host No. 7 Arizona State on Saturday and No. 44 Arizona on Sunday.

"Both are very good teams," head coach Jack Griffin said. "They are solid from top to bottom."

Arizona State is 2-0 this season, beating No. 60 San Diego and No. 27 Pepperdine. The Sun Devils will bring four ranked singles players to the court, led by No. 17 Adria Engel.

Oregon lost its match to Arizona State last season, 7-0.

"The loss to them last year definitely gives us motivation," Griffin said.

Arizona comes into the weekend with a 3-0 record and four freshmen. The Wildcats beat No. 59 New Mexico, No. 60 San Diego and No. 50 Kansas State.

"They have four freshmen that play for them right now, and that's why they are only ranked 44th," assistant coach Nils Schyllander said. "But they have beaten three ranked teams and will probably eventually be in the top 20."

The Ducks have confidence after performing well on the road against three ranked opponents, but feel they still have much to prove.

"Last weekend was really good and it made us really happy to have some justification for our improvement," senior Janice Nyland said. "But we still have a ways to go. We are definitely capable of winning either match if we play well."

One thing that is still bothering Oregon is its doubles play. The Ducks lost the doubles point in both the San Diego State and Loyola Marymount matches last weekend.

"We were able to play tough last week against Loyola Marymount and comeback after losing the doubles point," Griffin said. "But we need to improve on it because we will really be tested in the Pac-10."

Oregon is still working toward its main goal of improving every match and earning respect along the way.

"We're off to a really great start, especially after last weekend," Schyllander said. "But we are by no means where we want to be. We have to play better in doubles. We need to work on the little things and stay consistent in singles."

The Ducks host Nevada on Feb. 21, but then play 12 straight matches on the road. Their travels will include Washington, California, Louisiana and Florida.

Action against Arizona State begins 10 a.m. on Saturday and 11:30 a.m. on Sunday against Arizona.

"Everybody needs to step up for us this weekend," Griffin said. "We need to be strong top to bottom."

Peter Martini is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

## Sports briefs

### Oregon hosts Wushu championships

The Oregon Club Sports Wushu team is hosting the 6th Annual Collegiate Wushu Championships beginning 9 a.m. Saturday in Room 220 Gerlinger Hall.

The event will include more than 100 competitors from universities across North America. The Oregon Wushu team will be competing against UC-Berkeley, UC-Davis, Stanford and UCLA for the team championship. There is also a men's and women's all-around championship competition.

Competitors from Arizona, Washington, Simon Frazier University, have registered for the championships. The U.S. and Canadian national teams will also be present.

Wushu is a contemporary, traditional and internal Chinese form of martial arts, according to the Oregon club team.

### Soccer signs 10 recruits

Ten high school student-athletes have signed national letters of intent to play soccer for the Ducks. Oregon head coach Bill Steffen landed four players from California, three from Utah, two from Oregon and one from Hawaii.

"They will substantially raise the level in which we will play and compete," Steffen said. "We're looking for these kids to jump in and contribute quickly."

The Ducks were 8-8-2 last season, which was tied for the sixth best increase in wins from the previous year out of 278 Division I teams. It marked Oregon's best record since it added the sport in 1996.

The recruiting class: Katie Abrahamson (midfielder, West Linn, Ore.); Charlie Ashcraft (midfielder, Salt Lake City); Jessica Fetzer (defender, Salt Lake City); Mele French (forward, Mililani, Hawaii); Caitlin Gamble (midfielder, Salt Lake City); Cristan

Higa (midfielder/forward, Diamond Bar, Calif.); Salina Karia (forward, Portland, Ore.); Cassidy Kolb (forward, Camarillo, Calif.); Valerie Mayer, midfielder/defender, Pleasanton, Calif.); Andrea Valadez (forward, Torrance, Calif.).

### Oregon golfer tied for first

Senior Aaron Byers fired a 5-under 67 and was tied for the lead after the first round of the Taylor Made Waikoloa Intercollegiate, played Wednesday at the 7,074-yard, par 72 Waikoloa Kings' Course in Hawaii.

Byers had an eagle, four birdies, 13 pars and only one bogey as he shared the first day lead with Troy Matteson of Georgia Tech, who is the No. 5-ranked individual in the country.

As a team, the Ducks were tied for ninth with Rhode Island after the first day, carding a 3-over 291.

— from staff and wire reports

## Lever

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Lever is also aware of his late-game capabilities.

"If (my teammates) get in foul trouble down the stretch, or if we need a deeper bench come tournament time, I'll be there," Lever said. "I know they're out there working hard, and if they need a breather I'm ready to come in there and do the same thing."

The senior has been a mature role model, according to Kent, who said that Lever's enthusiasm and work ethic rubs off on the freshmen and sophomores. Lever even rubs off on the older junior-college transfers.

"He's an all-around great guy," junior transfer Robert Johnson said. "He's always there, like 'If you need anything, let me know. If you're having problems, tell me or talk to this guy.' He's just helped me stay on top."

Lever's enthusiasm for the game goes far beyond the limits of a bench or a starting lineup. His desire to win eclipses his desire for personal achievement, and Oregon is finally winning. At 17-7, the Ducks are well on their way to the postseason, where Lever has had success in the past.

In a first round NCAA Tournament game against Seton Hall two seasons ago, Lever had nine points coming off the bench. In high school, he averaged 33

points in the combined postseasons of 1996 and 1997.

Lever's postseason success mirrors that of his father, who led the Arizona State Sun Devils to two consecutive NCAA Tournaments in 1980 and 1981. Lever says that since he met "Fat," the two have shared basketball joys and hardships together.

"He's helped out as far as the things I've been going through with my hand and stuff like that," Lever said. "On the court, it's like he loves the game so much, he loves to play, and it's the same way with me."

Said like a true veteran, ready for his final major-league at-bats.

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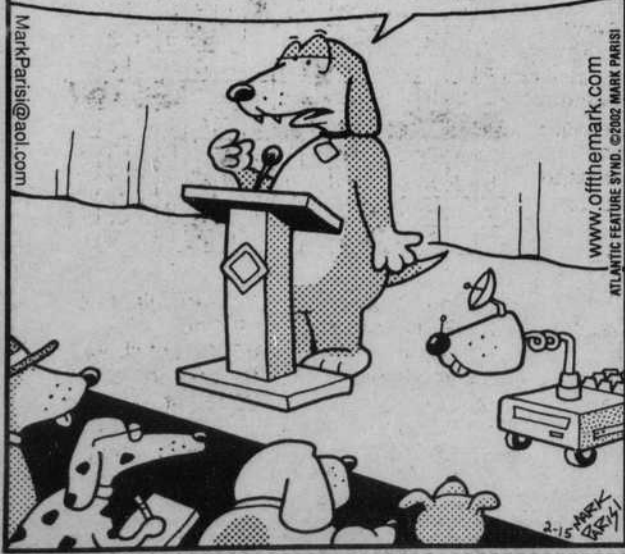
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