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Ducks lose again, again

The Oregon volleyball team takes California to five games Friday but can't pull away with a victory on the weekend

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

For one lonely Friday night at McArthur Court, the 927 fans in attendance were treated to a spectacular contest between the host Ducks and California.

The play was spirited and the spikes full of vigor, and the only thing left for Oregon fans was a win. Despite playing perhaps their finest match in two seasons, the Ducks (9-8 overall, 0-4 Pacific-10 Conference) fell to the Golden Bears (11-1, 2-1) in five games (30-28, 25-30, 27-30, 36-34, 15-11).

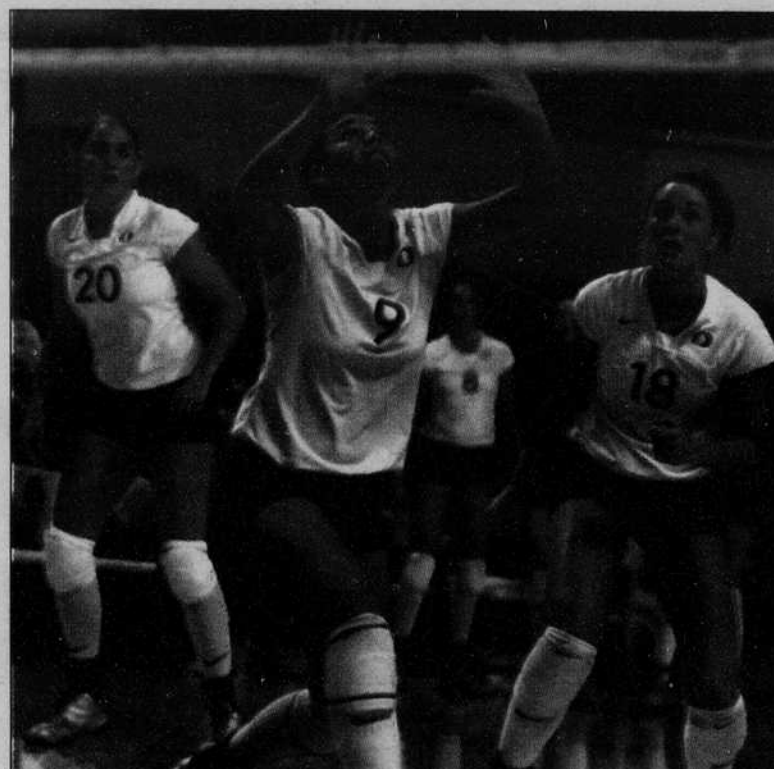
Saturday, Oregon never got on track and was swept (30-17, 30-9, 30-21) by No. 4 Stanford (12-1, 3-0) in front of 1,245 at Mac Court. The loss gives the Ducks a 25-match losing streak in Pac-10 play, with their last win coming during the 2000 season.

That streak, however, was in jeopardy Friday night as Oregon took control offensively early and often. Sophomore Lauren Westendorf set a career high with 14 kills, while freshman Dariam Acevedo and senior Lindsay Closs both had 19.

California's Mia Jerkov was better, however, en route to California's victory. The sophomore tallied 32 kills in 80 total attempts.

"We, in game 4, learned a lot," Westendorf said. "We learned that we have to put out in the end. It doesn't matter how hard we played in the beginning. It all comes down to the end. The best in the end is going to win."

With the match tied heading into the fifth set, Oregon came out flat.



Jeremy Forrest Emerald

Oregon volleyball players Lauren Westendorf (20), Jodi Bell (9) and Kelly Russell (18) and the rest of the Ducks fell twice over the weekend to California and Stanford.

After a service ace by senior Leah Young and a kill by freshman Jenna Brown to open the game, California never trailed.

The Golden Bears opened their lead further with four consecutive points to put them up 12-6. The Ducks pulled within three late, but the Bears were just too much in the end.

"We were a little less energetic and unable to execute as well as did in the first four games," Westendorf said about the deciding game. "Cal came out strong and they applied a lot of pressure to us."

After the match Closs, who has yet to win a Pac-10 match as a Duck, was noticeably upset.

"I think we were more conservative with our energy," she said about Oregon's inability to control the match late. "A lot of people mostly had energy and they felt like they had energy and were trying to conserve it for the big win."

"It just looked like we were trying to not to lose instead of trying to get the win."

Against Stanford, the Ducks fell behind early and never really stood

a chance against the defending national champions.

Junior Sara McGee posted 10 kills to lead the Cardinal while the Oregon offense sputtered. Acevedo led the Ducks with seven kills, but overall, as a team, Oregon had a negative .020 hitting percentage.

When asked why Oregon was not able to play up to its abilities, Oregon head coach Carl Ferreira had one simple answer.

"Stanford," he said.

"They're phenomenal from top to bottom," Ferreira added. "They're the defending national champs and they're better than a year ago. They're very physical, they're very talented, they're superior, and they've got one of the best players in the world in Logan Tom. I'm not quite sure it was as much what we were not able to do as much as was what they do to you."

Oregon returns to action tonight when it takes on non-conference opponent Portland (10-3, 0-0 West Coast Conference). First serve is set for 7 p.m.

Contact the sports reporter at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

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