

Ducks 'close' to ending Pac-10 losing streak

Oregon is still looking for its first Pac-10 victory since the 2000 season

Volleyball

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

With weekend losses to conference foes California and Stanford, Oregon volleyball's Pacific-10 Conference losing streak reached 25 games.

The Ducks' last conference win came on Nov. 9, 2000 — against Washington — as Oregon failed to win a Pac-10 match for the first time in program history last year.

Oregon was impressive against California in what was ultimately a

loss for the Ducks. Oregon sported a 2-1 lead entering the fourth game but was outlasted in the end by the Golden Bears.

"We're very close," senior Lindsay Closs said. "There was a lot of anticipation and a lot of excitement. We did put ourselves in a position to the win the match."

Closs, a transfer from Fresno State last season, has yet to win a Pac-10 match as a member of the Ducks. Lauren Westendorf and Katie O'Neil, both sophomores, also haven't beaten a conference opponent.

In what may be a silver lining to the cloud of Oregon's loss to California was the confidence the Ducks showed.

"When I was serving, I was think-

ing 'you've got to be confident,'" Westendorf said. "You can't go out there and say, 'I hope it goes our way, I hope they make a mistake.' You have to be confident and say, 'This will go our way, this will be our first Pac-10 win.'"

Not your average freshman

When Jodi Bell entered the Oregon program at the beginning of the season, she brought her winning bloodlines and accolades.

Not only did the freshman lead Sam Barlow High School in Boring, Ore., to state runner-up crowns in 2000 and 2001, she was named the Oregon Division 4A Player of the Year in 2000. In 2002, Volleyball Magazine named her as one of its

Fab-50 athletes.

Expected to come off the bench early in the season, Bell has assumed the starting-setter spot and has sparkled at the position. She already leads the team in assists this season with 539, and has contributed with 23 service aces, good enough for second on the Oregon squad.

"I just go out there and represent Oregon," she said. "It's a great feeling just being able to represent a school like this."

Serving to win

While Bell is second on the team in aces, the Ducks as a whole have improved on the serve. After recording just 137 aces in 2001, Oregon has already posted 129 this year.

Closs leads the team with 24, while junior Lindsay Murphy and freshman Kelly Russell both have 16.

At its current rate of seven aces per match, Oregon would finish with 229 this season. The Ducks still have far to go before setting the program record as the 1984 squad finished with 279.

Nevertheless, an improvement is an improvement, and for Oregon, that just might be enough for it to get a win and break its 25-match Pac-10 slump.

Next up

Oregon takes on perennial rival Oregon State Thursday at McArthur Court. First serve is set for 7 p.m.

Contact the sports reporter at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

Football life

continued from page 11

baseball at Santa Clara when we played at UCLA. In one at-bat, he walked, then stole second, third and home. Then he went to the nearby track meet in his baseball uniform and won the broad jump.

"The big pay college players get when they go in the pros is not good for the game. It affects the play of some in their last year, since they don't want to risk injury and the chance to earn a big contract. Aside from that, I don't think any of them are worth that much.

"When we had offices at Mac Court, there was an easy way for our coaches to get to know faculty members. I'd urge them to go to the Faculty Club down the street to have lunch with them. We used to show faculty groups game films, and sometimes they'd come up with some crazy play ideas, some even against the rules.

"I was surprised that the athletic administration building was named after me. I just did my job there (Until he was 95, Cas used to go to his office there almost every day).

"I coached baseball in high school. I had Hershel, the son of Ty Cobb, on my team. He wasn't very good, but was good in football. He just could not hit a baseball. Ty

Cobb came by to ask, 'Why aren't you playing my boy more?' I said, 'I've seen you sitting in your car watching our practices. You can see for yourself that he can't hit the curve.' The great baseball all-timer had to agree.

"It was different with another young athlete, and I made a good guess on him when he still was an infant. When Joey Harrington was born, I sent him a letter of intent. I sent the letter to his Dad, who had played quarterback for me at Oregon.

"Casanova is a Swiss name. We spoke Swiss at home all the time when I was a kid. My mother preferred speaking Swiss at home, so we kids learned it pretty thoroughly. I still remember how to say farewell:

"En gee, Envita estai sonds" (Good day, good life and may you stay healthy).

George Beres was Oregon sports information director from 1976 to 1982. He is the author of the 1995 Rose Bowl book, "The Year of the Duck."

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