

Oregon tries to clean its slate

The women's soccer team could be due for a win against the Washington schools

Soccer notes

Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

It has been nothing but a bumpy road and an uphill battle for the Oregon women's soccer team for a long time.

But, as they say, what goes up must come down.

"Soccer can be a very cruel game," head coach Bill Steffen said. "We need to keep playing well, keep doing the good things, and the rewards will come."

The Ducks are off to their worst start ever, at 1-7-1, since the program was established in 1996.

The Ducks have been playing good soccer, according to Steffen, but even when they dominate a game, the slightest mistake can cost the match.

"You can dominate a match for 89 minutes and 50 seconds — and slip up and give a goal," Steffen said. "We just haven't converted on the chances we have worked for. When you do get a chance, you convert it, and a lot of that comes down to confidence."

Confidence is something the Ducks need. But with the worst record in the Pac-10 and back-to-back losses to Portland State and

Portland, confidence can be scarce.

Oregon gave the Vikings an even match through 65 minutes Friday until goalkeeper Sarah Peters let a ball roll through her grasp, and that was the end for the Ducks. Portland State grabbed momentum and took only 27 seconds to score again.

"They need to keep their spirits up," Steffen said. "There are certain breaks involved, but they also need to understand you can make your own breaks to a certain extent."

Unsung hero award goes to...

She is a Eugene native. She likes peppermint ice cream. And she is the recipient of this week's brand new Emerald Unsung Hero Award.

She is junior midfielder Lindsey Werdell.

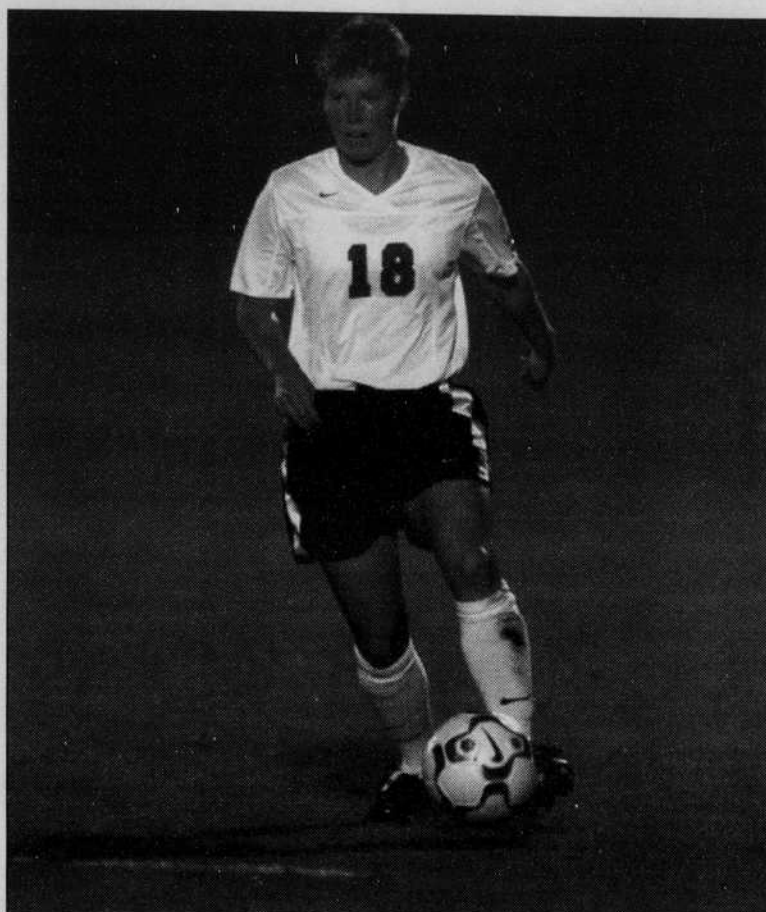
A graduate of Churchill High, where she was a four-year starter and captain her last two seasons, Werdell has been a solid player for Oregon.

"She's kind of quiet and has been very steady for us," Steffen said. "Lindsey is a very calming influence."

Werdell started all 18 games last season, recording 10 shot attempts and her first career goal in a win against San Jose State.

"She's asked to do a job, she does the best job she can and she's good at it," Steffen said. "If things are going well, she is generally a big part of why things are going well."

Werdell said her greatest athletic accomplishment was when the



Jeremy Forrest Emerald

Lindsey Werdell has been "very steady for the Ducks," according to her coach.

Ducks tied Washington last season in overtime.

Werdell and the Ducks will have a chance to build on that tie when

they play the Huskies on Friday at Papé Field.

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com

Ducks serve toward goals

The Ducks have slumped, but they've been aggressive in their service attempts

Volleyball notes

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

While the Oregon volleyball team remains mired in a 26-match Pacific-10 Conference losing streak, the Ducks can take solace in the fact that they have improved in at least one offensive category.

Oregon has 132 service aces in its first 19 contests, compared to 137 during the 2001 season. At their current pace, the Ducks, who average just under seven aces per match, will reach last season's total when they take on No. 13 UCLA on Friday in Los Angeles.

If Oregon holds true to its pace for the rest of the season, the Ducks would finish with 222 aces.

While the Ducks occupy last place in terms of wins and losses, they are currently second in the Pac-10 in service aces, only behind Washington, which has averaged 2.34 aces per game in Pac-10 play.

"We are an aggressive serving team," senior Lindsay Closs said. "We

just take it to every team we can."

Closs leads the Ducks with 24 aces while freshman Jodi Bell is close behind at 23.

Bell hasn't been the only freshman to light up the scoreboard from beyond the service line. Kelly Russell has 16 aces while Oregon's freshman four — including Darlam Acevedo and Jaclyn Jones — have accumulated 53 total aces, good enough for 40 percent of the team's output in the category.

"We end up jump-serving a little bit more than we have in the past," head coach Carl Ferreira said about the spike in service aces from last season. "We wanted to take some risks in regards to winning the serving and passing matchup."

"If I'm a fan watching the match, I'm wondering how a team can not keep the ball in 900 square feet of court. Well, at the same time, percentages will tell you that if you allow a team to stay in system, their opportunities to side out are going to be very, very high. So there is a risk-reward factor associated with the serving matchup."

Pac-10's best

The Ducks will be heading into a lion's den of sorts when they travel to Los Angeles to take on the Bruins

on Friday, and No. 1 USC the following day.

Not only are the Trojans considered to be the best team in the nation — by rankings and by analysts — they recently defeated No. 4 Stanford, allowing them to stake claim as the team to beat in the Pac-10.

The Bruins, on the other hand, are not as formidable to rest of the Pac-10, but to Oregon, they are dominating. The Ducks have never defeated UCLA in Los Angeles, and have come out on top just once — in 1987 — en route to a 35-1 advantage in the all-time series for the Bruins.

More on those freshmen

Not only have Oregon's freshman four been stellar on the serve this season, they have also produced during play, accounting for 373 of Oregon's 974 kills this season. That's equal to 38 percent of the team's output.

In fact, Russell was so good earlier this season, she was named the Most Valuable Player of the Fremont Loan and Investment Tournament, held in Northridge, Calif. Russell came through with 42 kills as Oregon won all four matches it played during the tournament.

Contact the sports reporter at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

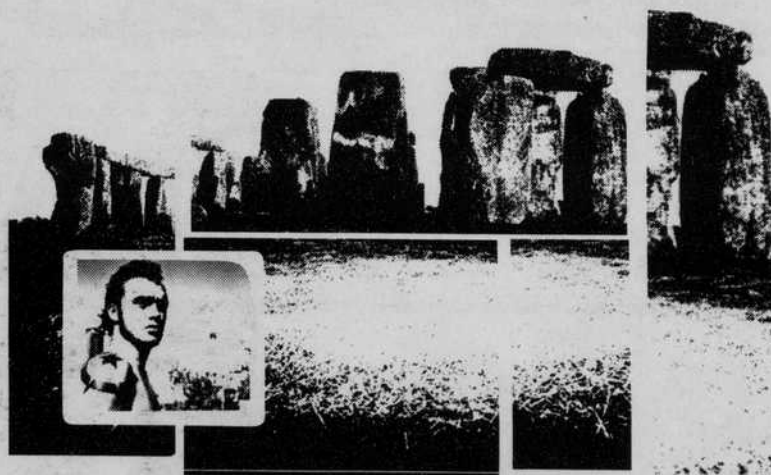
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