

SPORTS

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Best bet

NBA:

L.A. Lakers at Boston Celtics
4:30 p.m., TNT

Thursday, November 7, 2002

Mama's girls

After just two years as a Duck, Robi Thayer will leave the Oregon soccer team in search of a new 'mother'

Soccer

Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

It takes a long time to discover greatness for some and, for others, it just finds them.

Nine years ago, when Oregon senior Robi Thayer looked up into the stands, she realized just how many eyes were on her.

It was the Dana Cup, the world's largest soccer tournament, and Thayer's club team had advanced to the championship game. At just 13 years old, Thayer came face to face with greatness.

And she answered the challenge.

Her moment of glory came that day in Copenhagen, Denmark, as the Washington native scored her team's only two goals, and the Eastside FC club team went on to win the championship, 2-0.

Thayer was just a kid in those days, and now, at age 22, has plenty of her own kids to deal with. She is the "soccer mom," as her teammates call her, of the Oregon women's soccer team and, as a co-captain, Thayer takes it upon herself to take over the

motherly duties.

"I just take care of everyone, and if anyone has a problem then I take care of them," Thayer said.

In just her second year with Oregon, Thayer has established herself as both a strong presence on defense and as a team leader.

Prior to being a Duck, Thayer spent her early college years at the University of Texas-El Paso. Thayer started every game for UTEP in her freshman and sophomore years, and in 1998 she helped her team to the WAC Mountain Division Championship.

But two years in Texas were enough, and Thayer soon returned to the Northwest to join Oregon, the team that recruited her in her senior year of high school but lost the battle to UTEP.

"When she came here, she came with a pretty good understanding of Division 1 soccer and was a more mature, experienced player than entering as a freshman," Oregon head coach Bill Steffen said. "Her leadership in the back has been really helpful because she has been a better presence both physically and psychologically for us."

Thayer made an immediate impact on Oregon's defense in 2001 but battled injuries at the start of the season, causing her to miss three of the first four games.

And now, after her college career has flown by, Thayer will

step on the field one last time Friday night against Oregon State in her final game as a Duck.

Her partner in crime, sophomore defender Christine Mintz, knows Thayer will be missed and isn't looking forward to losing a friend.

"It's always hard to lose a natural leader," Mintz said. "She has definitely been one of the main personalities on the team. It will be hard for me because I have become great friends with her and she is a great player."

Thayer will be remembered by her younger teammates as a friend and a leader, but most of all as the "mama" who knows how to hit people.

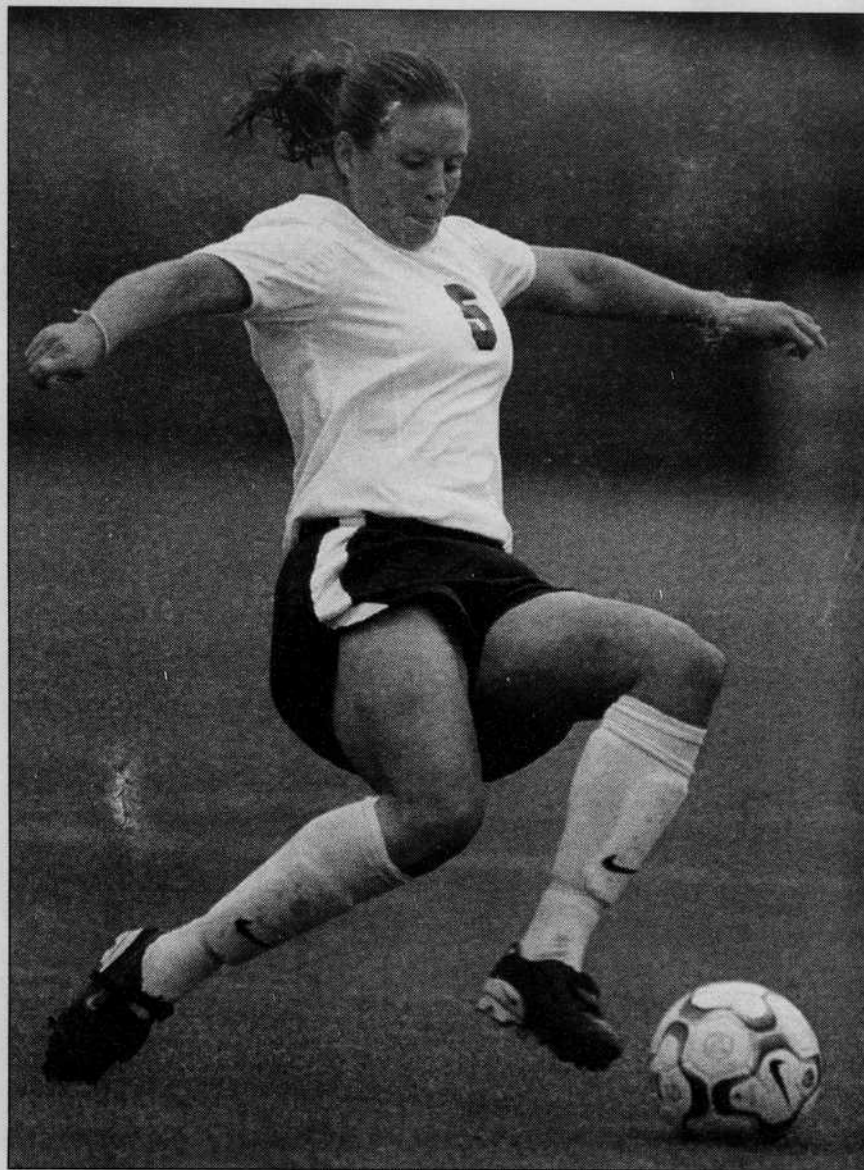
The 5-foot-10-inch native of Auburn, Wash., loves to hit people. This comes from a woman who did ballet for ten years as a child.

The defensive position seems to fit Thayer well, but there is more to her past than her aggressive tactics at UTEP.

"I would not trade it for the glory of being a forward, I would rather play defense," said Thayer, who played forward until her junior year of high school. "I have always played with boys since I was little, and I played with boys until they told me I couldn't anymore and I had to play with girls."

Soccer has been the sport of

Turn to **Thayer**, page 10



Adam Amato Emerald

Senior defender Robi Thayer has been a strong presence, and will lead her "kids" one more time against Oregon State tomorrow night in her final game with the Oregon soccer team.

Ducks run over Aussies in exhibition blowout

Oregon posts 135 points in the first game of the season, including a 79-point first half in a dominating performance

Men's basketball

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

The Oregon men's basketball team may have been playing a team from Down Under on Wednesday night, but they dominated the game from up top.

And down under, for that matter. And around. And everywhere in a 135-86 win over the Australian Institute of Sport in the Ducks' exhibition season opener.

In a landslide of impressive statistics, it was Oregon's shooting that stood out. The Ducks hit 48 of the 84 shots they took, including 31-of-44 in the first half. The Ducks made 10 of 13 three-pointers in the first half and ended the game shooting 62.5 percent from three-point land on 15-for-24 shooting.

"That's how we've shot in practice, and we just took it out there in a game," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said.

Birthday boy Luke Jackson led the way — Wednesday was Jackson's 21st birthday — with 32 points. Jackson missed only three shots and was perfect from the free throw line on seven attempts.

"I just came ready to play today," Jackson said. "The shots were there and they just dropped."

The shots were falling for all the Ducks in the first half. Oregon posted 79 points in the first frame of a completely dominating offensive performance — a performance that erased any doubts about whether a Freddie Jones-less Oregon squad could still be high-flying.

In one sequence, with Oregon leading 53-26 midway through the half, Ian Crosswhite hit a three-pointer and the AIS players led a fast break going the other way. But Jackson came up with a steal, and fed Luke Ridnour, who left the ball for Crosswhite, who finished with a massive dunk. On the next possession, Jay Anderson fed Jackson for a fast-break dunk, and on the next possession Ridnour found Jackson again, above the rim this time for a thunderous alley-oop.

"I still get impressed with those guys every day," transfer guard Andre Joseph said of his high-flying counterparts.

Of the newcomers, Joseph and Crosswhite made the biggest impression on the crowd of 8,206 at McArthur Court. Both were perfect from beyond the three-point line in the first half, and they finished with a combined 38 points. Crosswhite, competing against his former team, played 20 minutes and scored 19 points.

"We've got guys coming in that are really stepping up," Ridnour said.



Adam Amato Emerald

Luke Jackson had 32 points and nine rebounds in his 21st birthday-blowout Wednesday night. The Ducks beat the Australian Institute of Sport 135-86.

"I think we'll be just fine replacing (Jones and Chris Christoffersen)."

And from the old guard — or guards — Jackson and Ridnour proved they are still one of the top tandems in the country. The duo combined

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Oregon's transition game picks up right where it left off last year

Adam Jude
Senior Sports Reporter

If the Ducks had been any faster Wednesday, they would've been given a speeding ticket. Or at least been called for a false start.

But there was nothing false about Oregon's Tasmanian Devil-style season-opening win in front of 8,206 fans at McArthur Court. The No. 9 Ducks, ranked in the preseason for the first time in school history, ran wild in a 135-86 rout of the Australian Institute of Sport in their first exhibition game of the season.

"We didn't anticipate a really big blowout, but we played good defense and that opened up our transition game," said junior forward Luke Jackson, who paced the Ducks with 32 points and nine rebounds.

Even without guard Freddie Jones, the human highlight-reel drafted by the Indiana Pacers in the first round of the NBA draft, the Ducks blazed out to a torrid pace early on, led by junior point guard Luke Ridnour's 11 first-half assists.

"We are quicker team now than we were last year," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said.

The Ducks led by 10 with 12 minutes to play in the opening period, but went on a huge run — which included a 17-2 streak — to take a 79-37 lead into the locker room.

"It seemed really unfamiliar to look up and see 70 points in the first half. That's unheard-of," Jackson said.

The Aussies committed 21 turnovers in the first half, including 11 Oregon steals.

It doesn't hurt that the Ducks rarely missed. Junior guard James Davis, junior

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