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SPORTS

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NBA: Dallas at Houston
6 p.m., ESPN

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Volleyball coach speaks to Ducks' troubles

Oregon head coach Carl Ferreira is confident his team can overcome controversy and be successful next season

Volleyball

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

Oregon volleyball head coach Carl Ferreira, amid controversy regarding the departure of five players from his team, spoke to the Emerald on Tuesday about the situation and the future of the program.

Ferreira revealed that he had taken a "couple weeks away" from the program recently, based on a conversation he had with Senior Associate Athletic Director Renee Baumgartner.

Regarding five players' decisions to leave the team, Ferreira said he had no indications during the past season of the possibility of the moves, but did say he discussed it with juniors Diana Blank and Erika Widmark in December.

"I think they all wanted to be here," he said. "I don't think any one of them was tokenly going through the process. If you do that in Pac-10 volleyball, you'll just get swallowed up pretty quickly."

Ferreira, whose record is 30-61 in three seasons at Oregon, said the Athletic Department has been in full support of both the athletes and the program.

In addition, sophomore Alisa Nelson, who sat out the end of the season because of an ACL injury, told the Emerald on Sunday that she was released from the program and "wasn't really

given a clear answer."

"The only thing they said was that they weren't going to play me next year," she said.

Nelson said that she was told of the decision by the two Oregon assistants — Rhonda Rust and Keith Rubio — and that Ferreira was not present at the time.

Ferreira was on his leave at the time of the decision, and could not attend, although Nelson said it was not communicated to her why he was not at the meeting.

"It's that some of these things that transpired happened at the same time," Ferreira said. "We didn't know it was going to be as volatile as it turned out to be. Had I to do it over again, I definitely would have communicated that to her. I have since apologized to her personally."

Nelson said she had been fully confident she would be able to return to play next season despite her injury at the end of this year.

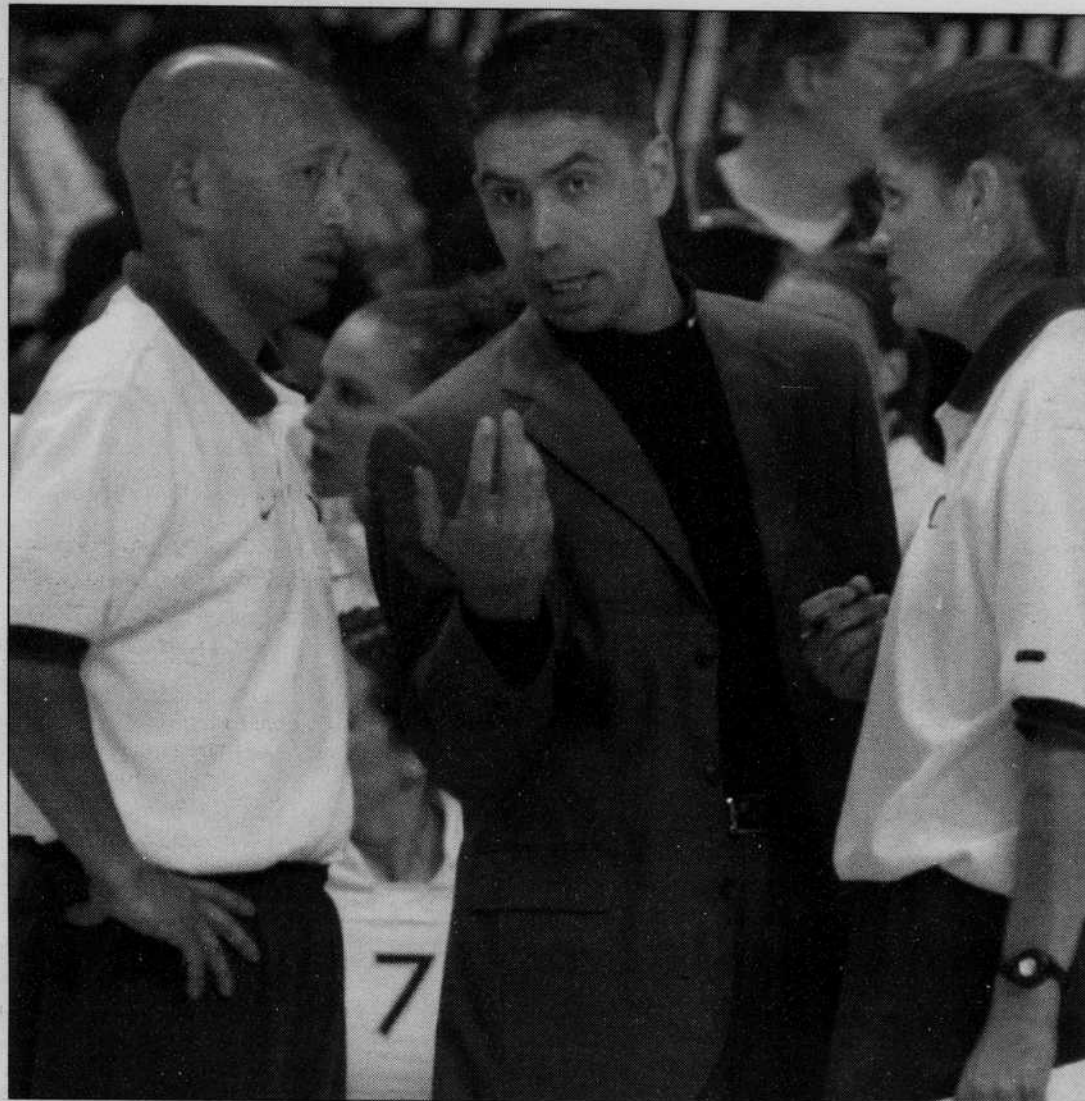
"I've been staying in volleyball shape," she said. "They know that."

Ferreira was adamant that the decision did not occur because of the injury.

"We'd never do that to a student-athlete," he said. "It's impossible to not potentially look at it from that perspective, and maybe make that statement. I can tell you she's the fittest athlete we have. She was going to make, or will make, a 100 percent recovery. That really had nothing to do with it."

Oregon is set to return six players next season, from a team that finished

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Adam Amato Emerald

Carl Ferreira (center), with assistant coaches Keith Rubio (left) and Rhonda Rust, spent two weeks away from the team.



Mark McCambridge Emerald

Luke Jackson's cut ring finger will likely keep him out of action in LA.

Jackson doubtful for road trip

He wants to play, but Luke Jackson's cut finger will likely keep him on the sideline during Oregon's trip to Los Angeles

Men's basketball notes

Adam Jude
Senior Sports Reporter

Though it's unlikely he'll be able to play, Luke Jackson is optimistic about returning to action this weekend after suffering a severe laceration on his right index finger Thursday in a win over Washington.

"I want to play on this road trip some time," the Oregon forward said Tuesday. "I can at least go in there and play some

good defense. I'm not sure how big of a factor I will be offensively, but I can get in there and hopefully help us get some wins, which is all that matters."

The Ducks, ranked No. 22 in this week's Associated Press poll (No. 19 by ESPN/USA Today), face UCLA on Thursday and USC on Sunday in their second Pacific-10 Conference road trip of the season. The first road swing for Oregon (14-4 overall, 4-3 Pac-10) turned into a nightmare in the Bay Area, where Cal and Stanford swept the Ducks by a combined 40 points.

And not having Jackson makes the Los Angeles trip that much more difficult, which is why the Ducks are preparing to play without him.

"Whether or not he'll play this weekend, I doubt that very highly," Oregon

head coach Ernie Kent said.

Jackson needed 13 stitches to repair the cut, which wrapped around about three-quarters of the base of his finger. He wore a sling for two days to keep the finger elevated and prevent swelling. Jackson said the stitches would be removed "in a couple weeks."

As the Ducks practiced Tuesday, Jackson worked out on his own, running sprints, dribbling and shooting short jumpers, though he never used his right (non-shooting) hand, which was wrapped in tape.

"It doesn't really hurt that bad," Jackson said. "It feels so much better day-by-day. Every day I get up and I can bend it a little farther and close my fist a little bit more. The biggest problem is that my

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Track teams merge under Martin Smith's coordination

With women's coach Tom Heinonen retiring, Bill Moos decides to hand both programs to Smith

Track and field

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

The Oregon men's and women's track and field teams will consolidate under Martin Smith's direction starting next year, Athletic Director Bill Moos announced at a press conference Tuesday.

Smith, currently the men's head coach, will assume the title of Director

of Men's and Women's Track and Field and Cross Country starting with the 2003-04 season. Women's track and field head coach Tom Heinonen announced his retirement in the fall, effective after the spring season.

"It was my challenge (after Heinonen's announcement) to make the decision as to whether we would hire another women's head coach or merge the programs," Moos said. "After a lot of consideration, study and research, we did decide to do what the majority of the Pac-10 schools have done before us, which is to merge the programs under one director."

UCLA is the only Pac-10 program remaining with separated programs. The Bruin women have finished sec-

ond in the last two NCAA Championship meets.

Moos insisted Oregon's move was not a cost-cutting one. He said the teams have a combined budget of around \$1.7 million, and that the budget will remain close to that size after the merger.

However, there may be cuts made in the area of coaching. Smith will only be allowed to keep six coaches and four volunteer coaches when the teams merge next year.

"What I'm going to do now is take a step back, and look at a number of different models and different strategic plans of how we would utilize our personnel and our coaching staff," Smith said.

Moos said he plans to hire a coach specifically for the women's distance runners and the women's cross country team. Currently, Heinonen specializes in coaching the women's distance runners.

Current Oregon athletes say they are excited and apprehensive about the possible future coaching changes.

"It's going to leave a huge hole in the program for sure," sophomore javelin thrower Roslyn Lundeen said. "I think we're probably going to go through a year or two years where we really have to rebuild what we've got. We've got a strong contingent this year and should have a good season. But yeah, I'd be shaky coming in as a freshman not knowing on what grounds I stood or

who would be there to coach me."

But Heinonen himself doesn't seem worried about the transition. He labeled Smith as a tireless worker and a driven coach.

"Nobody likes change, but it's time, and it's got to be done now," Heinonen said. "The way Martin (coaches), it's a high-quality, high-intensity program. Those guys are relentless."

Smith has already established himself as a master recruiter in his five years at the helm of the men's program. His recruiting class in 2001 was considered one of the best in the nation.

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