



Mac's at the Vet's Club

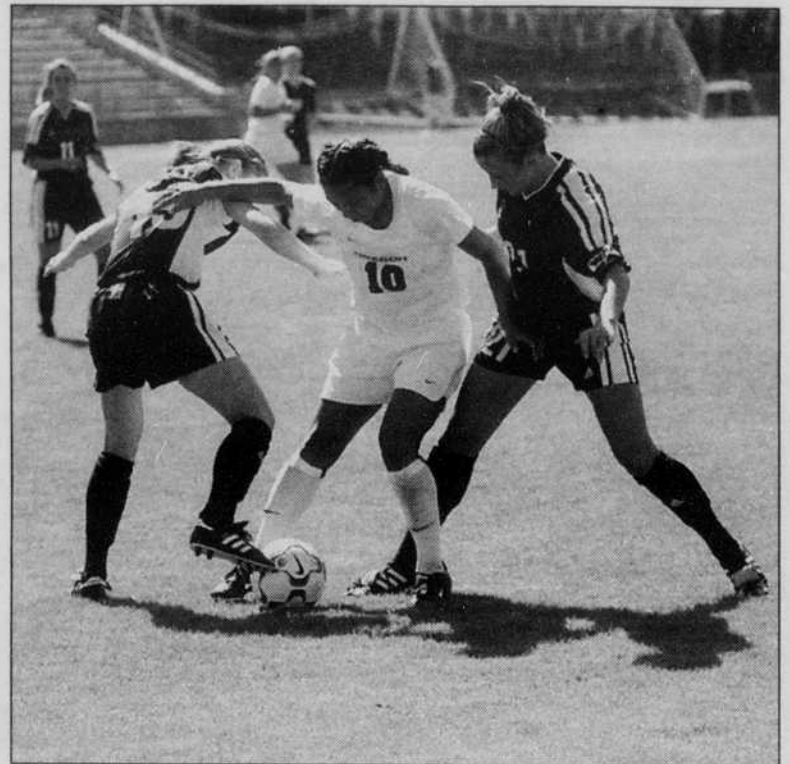


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Jessica Waters Photo Editor

Sophomore Andrea Valadez will look to provide a hand in Oregon's strong front line after missing last year due to a severe knee sprain encountered in preseason practice.

SOCCER

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underneath our belts."

The Ducks are a team that needs to learn how to win again after a building season in 2002. For an Oregon team that only accumulated two wins overall despite playing the third-toughest schedule nationally — with five opponents being ranked top-10 at one point in the season — the Ducks are ready to switch sides.

"The downside to last year was the record," Oregon head coach Bill Steffen said. "The upside was all these people got so many minutes against basically three No. 1 teams in the country. That was their experience and learning how to play at a top level.

"Now we're expecting them not just to compete at that level, which they did last year, but to win at that level. So that's part of their realization; one of the things in their personality is we know now we want to win, so that's an important step for their progress."

And Oregon has had no hesitation thus far in jumping out to a 5-0 start, the best ever in the program's history.

The Ducks are a young team this year with only two seniors and seven newcomers, but that doesn't mean they lack experience. Of Oregon's 10 sophomores, all but two

started at some point last year, with midfielder Cristian Higa and defender Carlie Ashcraft starting 18 and 15 games, respectively.

"We have a really deep team this year," Ashcraft said. "We have a lot of people that played a lot of minutes last year, so we have a lot of experience coming in even though we are young."

Oregon is also looking to prove itself to the conference after being ranked last in the preseason media poll to begin the 2003 season. And for a program that was established in 1996 and never had a winning season, Oregon wants the respect.

"We want to show that we belong and that we can compete and do well," Ashcraft said. "And we can, we have enough skill on this team and heart to do it."


With Garbin — who took nine shots in her first game back to break the school record, and as a freshman made four game-winning shots in her first five games — back on the field, this could be the season for the Ducks to say "Aloha" to another losing season.

"It's awesome, I love it," Ashcraft said on having Garbin back. "There's nothing like watching her run full speed at a defender with the ball on her foot. We're excited to have her back."

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com.

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