

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

## Destiny toward the hard court

Junior Daria Panova's path started as a figure skater but deviated when she found tennis

Alex Tam  
Sports Freelancer

Oregon junior Daria Panova strongly attests to a belief in fate.

One of Oregon's top women's players in the history of the program might not have ended up a tennis player. Growing up in Moscow, Panova, like many other Russian athletes, tested her skills in the sport of figure skating.

### DUCK TENNIS

A far cry from the grass and hard courts, the ice rink was her sporting venue of choice. While on her way to figure skating practice at the age of 7, Panova encountered an announcement that invited eager and passionate athletes to try out for a tennis organization. Panova immediately turned to her mother and told her she wanted to sign up.

From that point on, fate took over and the path to Oregon began.

For the next seven years, Panova realized her natural ability to play the game and practiced for at least an hour and a half five days a week. Later, as she reached the age of 14, practices became more grueling and intense — upward of five or six hours a day — at the Sopot Academy in Russia.

"I didn't even have time for school or anything," Panova said.

As she grew older, she faced the reality of the recruiting process from colleges in the United States. The Ducks started courting the up-and-coming tennis sensation when former Duck Monica Giesczyz helped to bring Panova's talents to Oregon. The Oregon tennis coaches persuaded Panova to sign her letter of intent and told her about the state.

"(The coaches) told me that it was really nice here and that it just rains a lot," Panova said.

Even though she had been to the United States just once for a tennis tournament, the assimilation to American culture was not a difficult process. Living in another country



Adam Amato Photo Editor

Oregon's Daria Panova, who expects to compete for the national championship this season, is heading to Ann Arbor, Mich., this weekend to play in the ITA National Championships. Oregon head coach Nils Schyllander said she is one of the top 10 players in the nation.

did not deter her from her goal of becoming the best tennis player possible.

During her freshman year, Panova joined the team toward the end of the season and made an immediate impact on the Pacific-10 Conference and the national scene. She defeated three ranked opponents, including a win at her first-ever match in the NCAA tournament.

Panova proved to herself and her team that she was the next rising star on the tennis circuit.

"Obviously we feel very lucky (to have her)," head coach Nils Schyllander said. "She's pretty much one of the 10 people in the country today who can win the national championship. I think she legitimizes our whole program. It rubs off on the whole

team, in a sense that our players get to play with her everyday and get to see what level the top players play and practice at."

Her sophomore season last year proved to be one of the best in the history of the Oregon tennis program.

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## Lewis quieted after comments to Seattle paper

Keith Lewis talked to Seattle media last week, but pays for it by not being allowed to speak to the press for the remainder of the season

By Mindi Rice  
Senior Sports Reporter

Senior Keith Lewis' attitude has gotten him in trouble before this season.

Last season, Lewis called Husky quarterback Cody Pickett "overrated" during a radio interview, and Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti banned Lewis from further interviews.

"Keith did not listen to me last year," Bellotti said Monday. "We had a little chat about certain things that I don't agree with, so he will not be available to the press or the TV or anybody."

Yes, it happened again, albeit to a different Seattle media outlet. Seattle Post-Intelligencer reporter Ted Miller talked to Lewis before Saturday's game at Washington, and Lewis continued his trend of giving a reporter plenty of material.

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## UO ready for pre-season opener

Oregon's 2003-04 season starts tonight when when the Basketball Travelers take to McArthur Court in an exhibition game

By Jon Roetman  
Sports Reporter

After weeks of battling one another in practice, the Oregon women's basketball team will finally get some new competition.

### WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

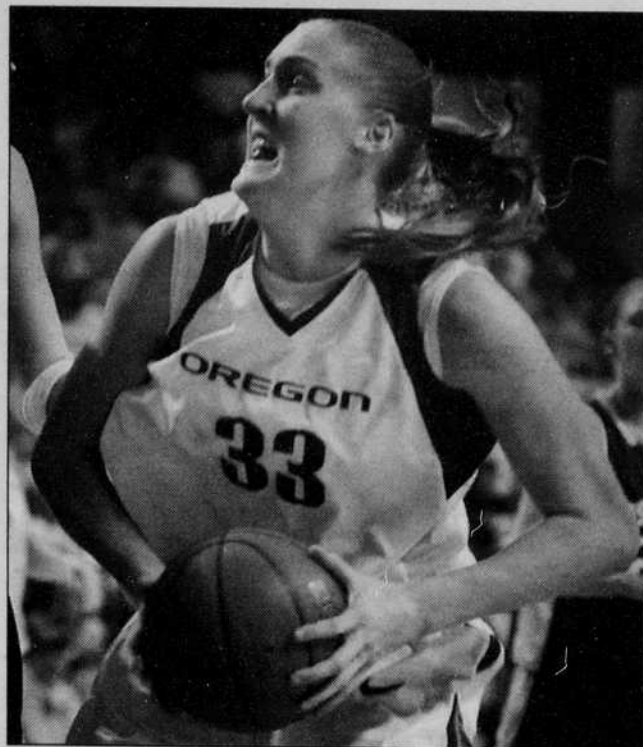
The Ducks face the Basketball Travelers tonight in their season-opening exhibition game at 7 p.m. at McArthur Court.

Oregon head coach Bev Smith said the Ducks are looking forward to facing other opponents even though their deep roster has kept competition fresh in practice.

"(Practice competition) hasn't gotten as old as it has in the past because of (our depth)," Smith said. "But there's still that sense that it's time to play someone else."

Wednesday will mark the first time since early in the 2002-2003 season that senior forward Cathrine Kraayeveld will play completely healthy. The All-America candidate missed 13 games last season with a staph infection in her right knee. Kraayeveld earned Honorable Mention All-Pacific-10 Conference honors while averaging 14.5 points and 10.1 rebounds per game but didn't qualify for conference or national statistics after playing in only 15 games.

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Emerald

Cathrine Kraayeveld is an All-America candidate for the Ducks.