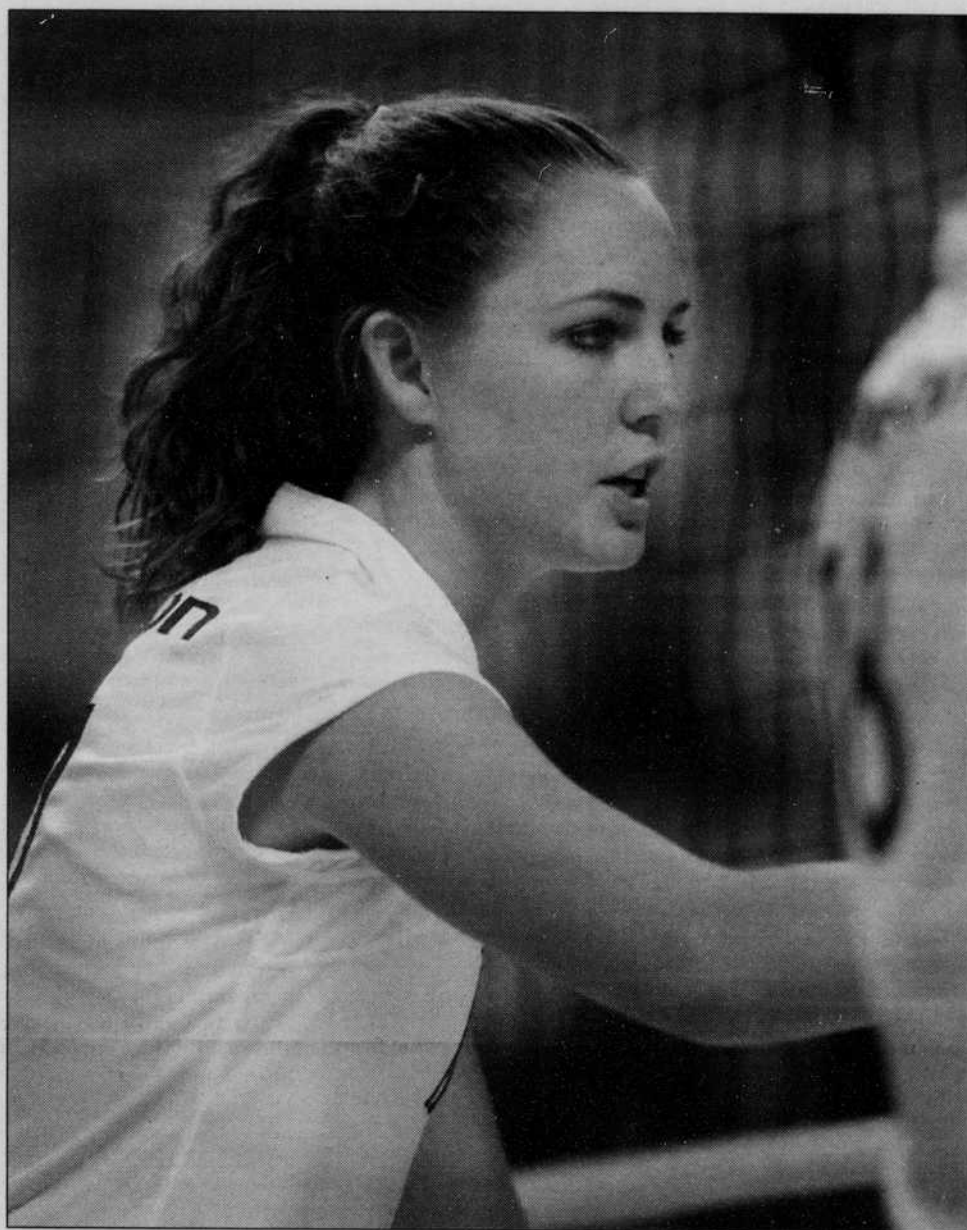


SPORTS

Sports Editor:
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Best bet
College basketball:
Marquette vs. St. John's
6 p.m., ESPN2

Thursday, November 13, 2003



Mark McCambridge Photographer

Sarah Mason has maintained an intense style of play even though Oregon has yet to win a conference match.

Island fever

Sarah Mason has had to adjust to living life in a new culture while leading the Oregon volleyball attack

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

When Sarah Mason was preparing to come to Oregon, she knew she'd be stepping outside her comfort zone.

The Hilo, Hawaii, native had no idea what she'd be stepping into.

Along with the usual difficulties that come with being a freshman in college, Mason has had to adjust to the drastic culture discrepancies between Eugene and Hawaii. Experiencing everything from the cold, damp weather of Oregon to a general lack of compassion she feels people treat each other with, Mason usually finds herself in a foreign situation every day.

"Hawaii is a totally different culture than over here," Mason said. "Over here, if someone honks their (car) horn, people think they're doing something bad, like they ran a red light. In Hawaii, if you honk the horn someone leans out of the window and says, 'hey, what's up?'"

Fortunately for Mason, there's someone who has been able to relate to her struggles every step of the way.

Head coach Carl Ferreira hails from Hilo as well and attended the same high school (St. Joseph's) as Mason. Ferreira has also held a 37-year friendship with Mason's high school and club coach, Rachele Hanohano. These similarities not only helped Ferreira lure Mason away from national-power Hawaii, but help him make life easier for her.

"You don't understand the difference (in Hawaiian culture) because initially, you're born into it," Ferreira said. "You start to learn once you separate from it, how different it actually is. It's a diverse accepted culture. It doesn't matter what race you are, you're an equal member of a community. They share the food, they share the arts and they share the language, and they blend all of it into a mixed culture. Your neighbor is like your relative."

Ferreira said he knew Mason was an individual rich with cultural pride the first time she called him "Uncle Carl." In Hawaii, people often refer to their elders as "auntie" or "uncle."

"In the history of coaching, I've never had anyone call me Uncle Carl," Ferreira said. "I laughed the first time she said it because she said it out of pure culture. I thought it was awesome, and it was just her being her. It's a special relationship, and I have to provide her with a great deal of empathy and reassure her that she'll be OK."

Despite experiencing cultural inconsistencies, Mason's play on the court has been anything but. The 6-foot-3 outside hitter has evolved into the Ducks' top attacker. She leads the team in kills (242), kills per game (3.10) and hitting percentage (.270), while making a strong push to be on the Pacific-10 Conference All-Freshman team. She has become a go-to attacker for the Ducks while gaining the respect of her teammates.

"I know that she's an amazing athlete and an amazing volleyball player and whenever I set her, I know she's going to put the ball down," sophomore setter Jodi Bell said. "There's not doubt in my mind that she's a go-to hitter of mine, and I know she'll make a kill for me."

Though impressive, Mason's statistics

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Top 20 class finds its way to Kent, Ducks

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent lands a top 20 recruiting class for the second straight season

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

Just one season after grabbing the 15th-best recruiting class in the nation, Oregon head coach Ernie Kent announced a trio of players Wednesday just one notch below.

Richmond, Texas' Chamberlain Oguchi, Redmond's Maarty Leunen and Bryce Taylor, who hails from North Hollywood, Calif., all signed National Letters of Intent Wednesday to play with the Ducks beginning next season.

Last year's class of Aaron Brooks, Mitch Platt and Ray Schafer garnered a No. 15 ranking. This year's group was named the 16th-best in the nation by Dave Telep of TheInsidersHoops.com and was given a No. 21 rating by the Official College Sports Network.

The three will come in next season when the Ducks lose seniors Luke Jackson, Jay Anderson, Andre Joseph and James Davis to graduation.

"Probably the common thread — even though they are from California, Texas and Oregon — is the fact that all three are tremendous students and tremendous character," Kent said. "That is very important to us in all our recruiting efforts."

"When you combine this group with the class that came in last year, that is just an outstanding group of guys. I don't know if anybody in the Pac-10 can say they have a class that is better than the

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Oregon touts accomplishments

Oregon ended its season without an NCAA bid, but it accomplished much more than it expected

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

The Ducks took a 180-degree turn this season.

Oregon turned its back on the 2002 season this year after finishing 2-14-2 overall, the worst record in program history. The Ducks came back recharged in 2003 and pulled off the best record, 9-11, in the program's history.

They are proud of that.

"We proved to ourselves and to everyone that we are a really strong team and a strong program and we're developing," goalkeeper Dominique Lainez said.

Oregon wanted to prove it wouldn't finish last in the Pacific-10 Conference as coaches had predicted in the preseason.

Oregon finished seventh. Oregon wanted to prove it was no longer a pushover team and that opponents need to come prepared to play. Oregon took then-No. 2 ranked UCLA into double overtime on Sunday and made a statement.

"That was a great game to end the season on," senior team captain Lindsey Werdell said. "People were really excited and happy that we came out and gave



Iris Mora (10) scores UCLA's game-winning goal in double overtime on Sunday against Oregon's Dominique Lainez. It was a nearly a block for Lainez, much like Oregon's near miss in making the NCAA tournament for the first time.

Mark McCambridge
Photographer

UCLA a battle. I think you could hear a sigh of relief when the game was over on their side of the bench."

The Ducks finished 3-6 in conference play this season, which ties the program's best-ever conference record for the program. Oregon began the season on a five-game winning streak, the longest in the program's history.

Oregon found several ways to accomplish what had never been accomplished in the program this season. All the Ducks wanted after it was over was to be respected.

"I definitely feel we have gained a ton of respect from other schools in the Pac-10 and throughout the other conferences as well," Lainez said. "These upcoming years we are just going to be better and better, and we'll gain more respect."

The Ducks did fall short in reaching their ultimate goal this year, advancing to

the postseason for the first time in the program's history. Oregon would have had to win at least one game in its final weekend to be considered for a spot. The Ducks lost both.

"We still have the right to keep our heads up (even though) we didn't get that one goal that we shoot for every season to get to that tournament," redshirt sophomore Nicole Garbin said. "And we didn't get it, but we did other things for this program. We opened that door up even wider. We're just going to get even better."

Oregon loses just three seniors — goalkeeper Mary Etter, defender Dara Wone and Werdell will all graduate.

Oregon head coach Bill Steffen said the most difficult aspect to replace will be the leadership that they brought to the team.

"All three of them were very essential for

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