

## THOMAS

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Take redshirt sophomore Nicole Garbin for example. She was the star freshman in 2001 and redshirted the 2002 season after tearing her anterior cruciate ligament.

In 2002, the Ducks finished 2-14-2 overall, the worst record in program history. This year, Oregon finished 9-11 overall, the most wins in program history.

Coincidence? No.

Garbin led the Pacific-10 Conference in shots (70), tied redshirt freshman Andrea Valadez for goals (7) and was named to the All-Pacific-10 Conference Second-Team.

Without Garbin, Oregon could have been left with just one conference win, just like 2002. Oregon's nine wins deserve nine rounds of applause as the largest turnaround in the program's history.

Then you have the women's basketball team, another prime example. Redshirt junior Corrie Mizusawa is back after sitting out last season due to NCAA transfer rules. Senior Cathrine Kraayeveld is back in full swing after missing half of last season because of a staph infection in her right knee.

Now Mizusawa and Kraayeveld lead the team in minutes, averaging 38 and 36, respectively. Kraayeveld leads in scoring with 25.5 points per game and Mizusawa is third with seven.

The result? A 2-0 start before Tuesday's game, including an upset of then-No. 9 ranked LSU and the No. 24 ranking in the Associated Press poll. Oregon hasn't been ranked at all for the past two seasons.

Last season marked Oregon's first absence from the postseason since 1993.

But not this season. This season will be different. This season will mark Oregon's return to the NCAA tournament for the first time in two years.

With Kraayeveld and Mizusawa back in full swing, Oregon should advance out of the first round of NCAA's for the first time since 1998.

Tuesday night's game offered more reassurance of the dominance that the women's basketball team brings to the table. A 16-point blowout of Gonzaga proves that LSU wasn't a fluke and that Oregon will win more this season.

Bottom line: It is finally time for the Oregon women to step into the spotlight.

That includes everything from record-breaking performances by the soccer team to early upsets in basketball to adding women's lacrosse as Oregon's new sport.

It all proves that this is the revival and rejuvenation of the Oregon women. Track and field and softball remain question marks in future successes.

If women's basketball can continue the success that women's soccer started, you will soon see the Oregon women prove their place as the stars of the University.

It's not the 2001-02 year of football and men's basketball but the 2003-04 year of the Oregon women.

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## MEN

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dogs owned a plus-17 rebounding margin over its opponents.

"They rebounded hard and that was a test for us too, because last year we didn't rebound so well and hopefully we're going to improve on that this year," sophomore forward Ian Crosswhite said.

Oregon also held Fresno State to just four assists. Fresno State guard Shantay Legans led his team with two. Offensively, the Ducks finished with 20 assists on 26 baskets.

"They (the Ducks) really broke the game down to a one on one court for them with Shantay doing a lot of the dribbling, a lot of the ball handling, a lot of the driving because we took the options away from their sets they were trying to run," Kent said. "That is awesome to do that in a first ball game."

Kent made a point to praise his players on their defensive efforts, including Crosswhite and center Mitch Platt.

Kent also spoke of guard Andre Joseph as being one of Oregon's top defensive threats on the perimeter, saying "he's very valuable for us defensively."

### McArthur Court at its best

It was the 10th consecutive sellout for the Ducks when they played Fresno State. It was the first season-opening sellout for Oregon since 1978.

As the 9,087 in attendance filed into McArthur Court on Friday evening, senior forward Luke Jackson knew it was going to be a good one.

"Even before the game, you could

tell that the atmosphere in Mac Court was going to be really good," Jackson said. "When you have that, everybody just is extra into the game. It was so loud in there."

Students lined up early before the game so that a select few could receive the coveted Pit Crew T-shirts that are given out each year. The Pit Crew didn't disappoint.

At one point in the second half, the Pit Crew and Oregon fans were asked to stop jumping up and down during a Fresno State free throw that caused the backboard to shake.

Kent was excited about the charisma that the crowd brought so early on in the season.

"I thought the crowd was just tremendous in the game, for a first game at Mac Court," he said. "What an outstanding job they did."

### Free throw woes

Kent found it hard to point out things that Oregon didn't do right after the season-opening win. But free throws were one issue that could be brought up.

Oregon's 60.9 free throw percentage against the Bulldogs was an improvement from the 49.1 percent figure during exhibitions.

Platt struggled in Oregon's opener, shooting 2 of 9 from the foul line. The freshman ended his night at the charity stripe by missing seven in a row.

"If you want to pick at something, you can say we can continue to work at Mitch Platt and his free throw shooting and we'll do that," Kent said.

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## VOLLEYBALL

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With no seniors and only two juniors, Oregon lacked the experience needed to finish strong and pull games out at the end. Ferreira compared the competition between the inexperienced Ducks and the rest of the conference to a junior varsity team battling a varsity squad.

"If you take a junior varsity team and play the varsity, I don't know who could be successful," Ferreira said. "If you put freshmen and sophomores against the varsity football team, they'd probably get crushed."

Though Oregon would have loved to win at least one conference match, the Ducks had several moral victories during the season. After struggling through the first half of the conference schedule, Oregon made noticeable improvements down the stretch. The Ducks won their first Pac-10 game on Oct. 23 against then-No. 9 UCLA at McArthur Court, proving to themselves they had what it takes to compete with the nation's elite. The following evening, Oregon took No. 1 USC to the brink in game one before falling, 30-28. The Ducks set a season high with 12.5 blocks against a team that eventually had five players named to the All-Pac-10 team.

Oregon closed out its home schedule with a heartbreaking loss to Arizona State on Nov. 14. The Ducks showed potential, putting themselves in a position to win every game, but gave way to the more experienced Sun Devils, 3-1 (30-28, 27-30, 30-28, 30-28).

As the Ducks walked off the McArthur Court floor, fans could be

heard groaning with heartache and despair, which in most cases is a bad thing. This, however, wasn't your ordinary case. Despite entering the match winless in 15 conference matches, Oregon had captured the hearts of fans who believed the Ducks could win. This support should carry into next season when a more experienced Oregon squad figures out how to not let such close matches slip away.

With the 2003 season in the books, Ferreira and his players have already expressed excitement when looking forward to 2004. Oregon added depth at the attacking positions for next season, signing a pair of recruits to national letters of intent two weeks ago. Justine Petry of Trumansburg, N.Y., and Karen Waddington of Langley, British Columbia, are both 6-foot-2 middle blockers that will instantly make the Ducks a more explosive team.

Oregon will also have plenty of talent coming back. Outside hitter Lauren Westendorf and libero Katie O'Neil will return as senior leaders. Outside hitter Sarah Mason established herself as one of the Pac-10's top attackers this season en route to being named to the Pac-10 All-Freshman Team.

Oregon's future is a bright one and can be attributed to Ferreira and the hard work he's gotten from his young squad.

"We commend Carl for the changes he made this season," Westendorf said. "Everything was more comfortable. This was my favorite season of collegiate volleyball. I'm so much happier than I've ever been."

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## WOMEN

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assists. In Oregon's three games this season, Mizusawa is averaging 10.7 assists.

"She's a silent killer," Smith said. "She did a great, great job. I thought she made some very smart plays, particularly towards the end."

In the first game of the season, Mizusawa had 13 assists against Valparaiso. She now accounts for two of the top 10 spots for single-game assists in Oregon's history just three games into her first season as a Duck.

Freshman forward Jessica Shettlers and sophomore guard Chelsea Wagner saw their first on-court action as Ducks, with Shettlers grabbing two rebounds and Wagner getting two steals.

"Jessie came in and did some very good things," Smith said. "Chelsea didn't shoot that well, she's a shooter and I think she was so excited that she almost shot one all the way back to Eugene. But what the young lady did was came in and she got two steals and she really flustered them."

Shettlers, Wagner and their teammates return to action Friday and Saturday in the Oregon Classic at McArthur Court. Oregon takes on Kansas at 8 p.m. on Friday and North Carolina State at 8:30 p.m. on Saturday.

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