

Wins, new competition on docket for UO rugby

The Club women's rugby team is gearing up for the start of the league season

By Kirsten McEwen
Freelance Reporter

Simon Fraser University traveled south from Vancouver, B.C., in search of competition and the Oregon women's Club rugby team provided just that.

Club Sports

On Saturday, the Ducks hosted a "very experienced Canadian club team," Club Coordinator Jessie Oettinger said. Although the game was just a "friendly" match and no score was recorded, both sides looked to take away something productive from the contest.

Oettinger wanted the game to serve as a "learning experience" for the 14 rookies on the Oregon roster. With only 6 returners from last year's squad, the Ducks had to recruit nine players just to field a full team.

"We recruited heavily in the dorms and in the (Student Recreation Center) weight room because we knew we needed a substantial amount of girls to even play," Oettinger said.

With more than half of the girls on the field being new to the sport, the Ducks invited the Eugene Housewives — a Eugene-based women's rugby club that was restarted by UO alumni rugby players — to come out and give Oregon more depth and experience on the field against Simon Fraser. The game was Oregon's last chance to fine-tune its skills before league play resumes.

In preparation for the upcoming

season, Oregon participated in a fall league and traveled to Portland a handful of times to compete in a number of tournaments hosted by the Portland Rugby Club. The Ducks played one regular league game against Central Washington and took home their first victory of the season.

Oregon will compete in the Pacific Northwest Rugby Football Union in the Central Pacific Coast Region. Seven teams — Central Washington, Oregon State, Reed, Washington, Washington State and Western Washington — will compete against Oregon for a chance to enter the Sweet 16 Tournament.

Two years ago, the Ducks went undefeated in league play and finished 10th in the nation at the Sweet 16 tournament, held in Orlando, Fla. After graduating 12 players last year and with a team comprised of

inexperienced players, Oettinger wants the focus this year to be on other things besides winning, like building positive team chemistry and strong friendships.

"It's a pretty complicated game," Oettinger said. "So this year with so many new people the emphasis is more on learning all the different parts of the game and getting to know each other."

Although teammate Krista Gust agreed that learning has become a top priority in both practices and games, she said the team's goal is still to be competitive and win games.

"Even though we are young, we are still aiming to win," Gust said. "We have a lot of confidence in our new players getting in there and getting it done."

The Ducks will restart league play on Feb. 7 against Washington in

Portland. Oregon will play a total of six league games, with their first home game scheduled on Feb. 21 against Reed at Oregon's Southbank Field.

"This year, the best team in league will be a surprise," Oettinger said. "Washington State looks good, Washington has a few good players, OSU also looks awesome. ... It's going to be interesting for sure."

The women's rugby team practices twice a week from 5 p.m.-7 p.m. on the turf field by the Student Recreation Center and it is still actively recruiting players to join the team.

"We have room for every body on the field," Oettinger said. "We need both little bodies and big bodies."

Kirsten McEwen is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

REBOUNDS

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"I've seen them both, but just like Ike (Diogu) and Channing (Frye), they're the best players on those teams and you've got to go at them like you do every day," Platt said.

The honors keep coming

Luke Jackson is left as one of the 30 players listed as candidates for the John R. Wooden award.

The award, which is given to the

nation's player of the year, was trimmed by 20 on Monday. Jackson, who is averaging 22.3 points and 7.4 rebounds per game this season, is on it for the first time.

He is one of four Pac-10 players still on the list. Also included is Arizona State's Diogu, Stanford's Matt Lottich and Arizona's Andre Iguodala. The trio ranks first, 13th and 15th, respectively, in scoring in the Pac-10.

Also this week, Jackson was named to the Sporting News's five-member first-half All-American team. The list

was composed of Jackson, St. Joseph's Jameer Nelson, Connecticut's Emeka Okafor, Syracuse's Hakeem Warrick and Texas Tech's Andre Emmett.

Prognosticators' previews

There are some in the mainstream media who seem to think the Ducks might be able to make a run for it come NCAA Tournament time. Of course, that's if all the pieces come together at the right time.

"The Ducks have to hang on while freshman point guard Aaron Brooks

is out with a wrist injury," Sporting News writer Mike DeCourcy said. "That could be too much for them. They just don't have the necessary spark with Brooks missing from the lineup. But if they're in the tournament, he'll probably be there. In that case, they'll have a versatile enough offense to be dangerous."

On Bracketology, run by Joe Lunardi at ESPN.com, the Ducks are not in the predicted field of 65. According to Lunardi's daily rankings, Oregon is among a number of teams that are on

the bubble when the NCAA Tournament is discussed.

Lunardi did write that the Ducks' game against Stanford on Saturday is one of the top games of the week.

"Even great Pac-10 teams sometimes lose at Mac Court," he said.

Lunardi has just three Pac-10 teams — Stanford, Arizona and UCLA — as his choices to represent the conference in the NCAA Tournament.

Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

REELING

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working on, but didn't get a chance to do that in the match.

Coulda, woulda, shoulda

Kearney said if some of his guys who were expected to win their

respective matches this weekend would have, Oregon could have come out with two victories.

"If we win the 125-pound class, and the 157-pound class, we win those matches," Kearney said. "Those are matches we have won in the past."

"Three of those we were supposed to win (against Cal State-Bakersfield). And with 157, 165, 174 and

197-pound classes we assured ourselves defeat just by the way we stepped onto the mat. And when you do that, how can you be surprised at the results? Those guys are better than that, the 157, 165, 174-pound kids have beaten their guys before."

Meet the parents

Dustin Fisher was able to capture

his third victory of the year in front of someone special. His mom.

It was the first time Fisher's mom had the chance to come down to see him wrestle since he arrived in Eugene two years ago.

"We are real pleased with him," Kearney said. "The hardest thing in wrestling is to work as hard as everyone else and pay a big price and try to put it

all together and not have success that should come with it. My hat goes off to him. The courage it takes every time to step out there ... and put out that kind of effort. It was a good win for him."

Fisher won his match in the 184-pound weight class.

Scott Archer is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

TIE

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Californian on Jan. 21. "Alisa was an active person, and she would want us to get out there."

California players are honoring Lewis' memory on their uniforms. Across each left shoulder strap is a

black strip with pink lettering that says "AL #31." The patch, which has pink because it was Lewis' favorite color, is meant to honor her personal and athletic achievements.

At a memorial held in Lewis' honor Thursday in Haas Pavilion, the team presented Lewis' parents with an autographed basketball and a charcoal sketch of Lewis drawn by a

teammate. On behalf of the university, head coach Caren Horstmeyer presented Lewis' parents with their daughter's framed jersey.

"As a player she gave every ounce of effort and her best every day," Horstmeyer said at the memorial. "There is a basketball court in heaven, and she's on it."

During the memorial, the

California Athletic Department announced the launch of a scholarship in Lewis' name.

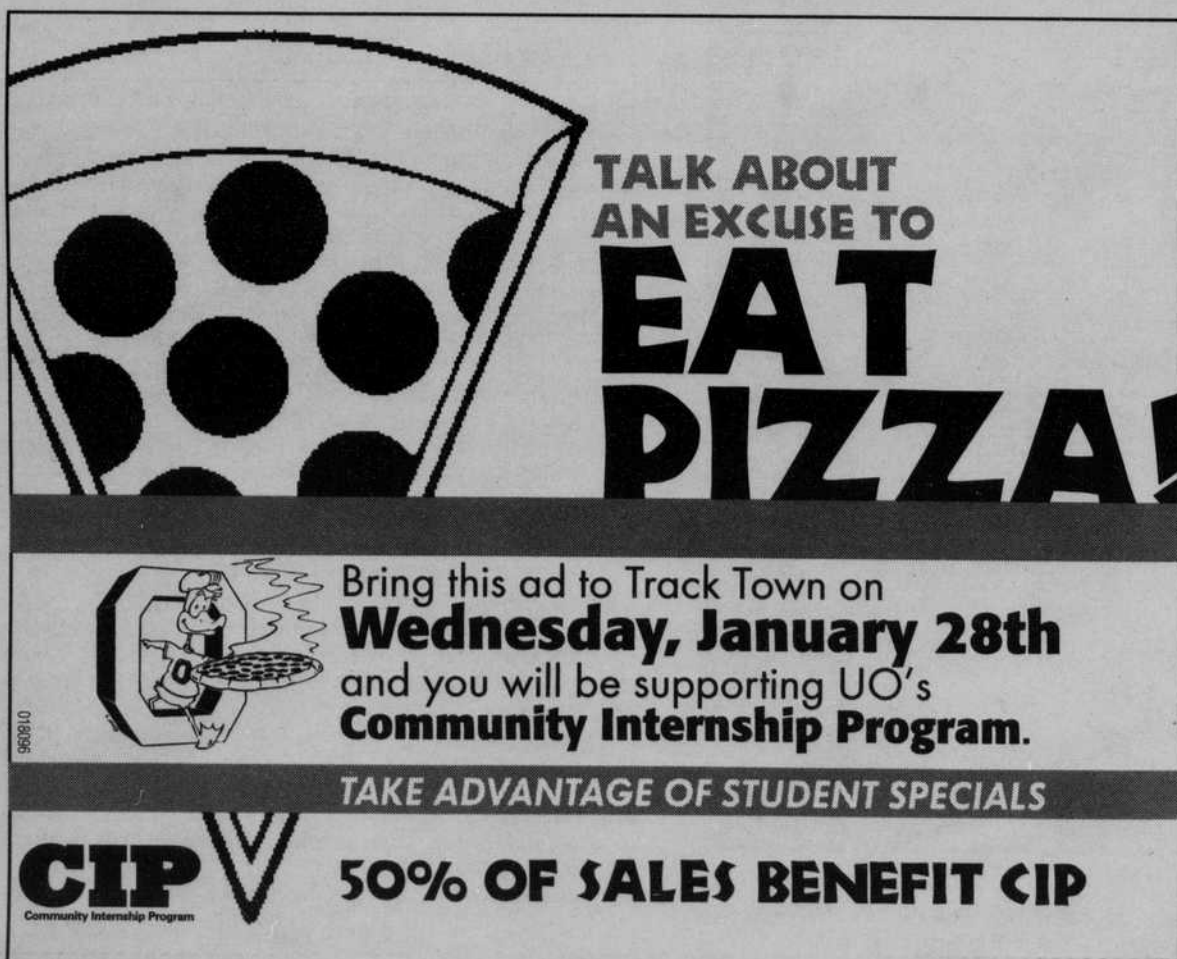
Stanford falls in polls

Despite its loss to USC Sunday, Stanford remained in the top 10 in both the Associated Press Top 25 and the ESPN/USA Today polls. The Cardinal fell to No. 8 in both polls from a

No. 6 ranking last week.

Pac-10 teams receiving votes but not ranked in the top 25 in the AP poll are Arizona and USC. Arizona, Southern California and Arizona State all received votes in the ESPN/USA Today Coaches poll.

Contact the senior sports reporter at mindirice@dailyemerald.com.

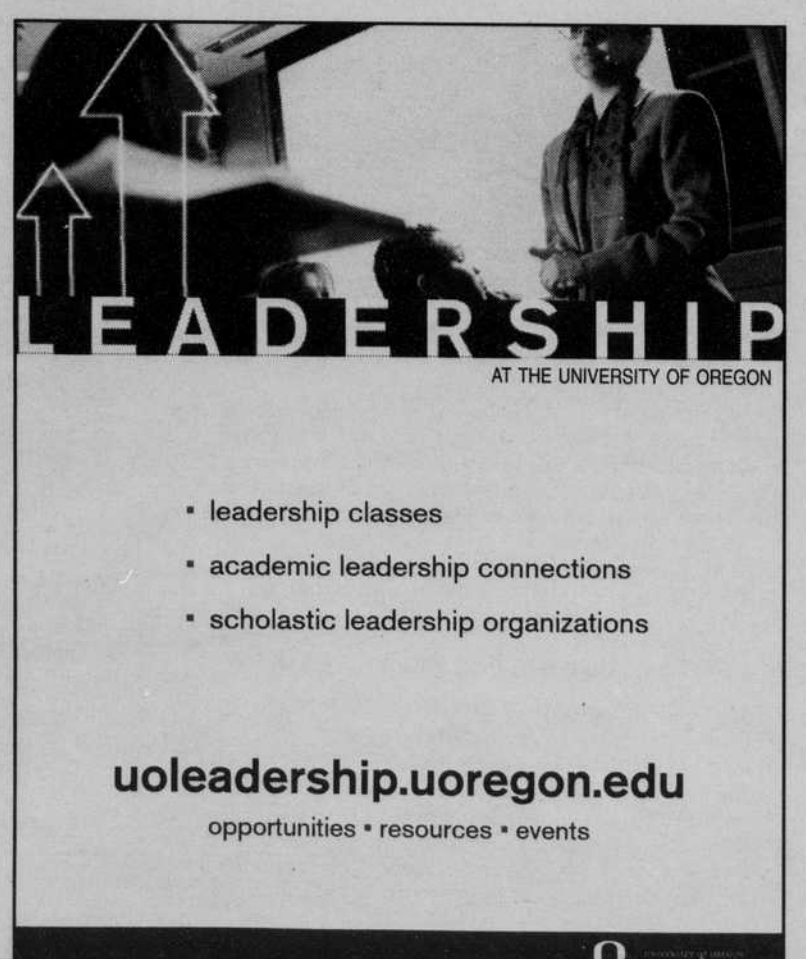


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