

# Perfect season becoming possible as Stanford heads into second half

Stanford kept its winning streak alive with a close win over Oregon last week

By Jon Wilner  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

SAN JOSE, Calif. — The question comes at Stanford from all angles, at all times — from media and fans, from friends and students, on campus, around town and along the West Coast.

"Can we go undefeated? Sure. Are we going to? No," Coach Mike Montgomery said Saturday after Stanford rallied from a 19-point, second-half deficit to beat Oregon.

"This was a loss waiting to happen. So was the USC game. They're out there. The next one is all we want to win.

"Thinking in terms of running the table would guarantee we'd lose the game."

A better question might be, does Stanford want to be undefeated heading into the NCAA tournament?

Well, it does and it doesn't.

No one wants to lose — not the players, coaches or managers. Stanford hasn't won 18 games in a row, beaten Kansas, Gonzaga and Arizona, overcome Oregon and reached No. 2 in

the national rankings without being fiercely competitive.

But no one is salivating at the prospect of entering the NCAAs with a zero in the loss column, because that would mean a bull's-eye on the back — not to mention enormous pressure and media scrutiny.

At least that's how former Nevada-Las Vegas coach Jerry Tarkanian remembers it.

His 1990-91 Rebels were one of the most feared teams of the past quarter century. They were the defending national champs, had three future Lottery Picks (Larry Johnson, Greg Anthony and Stacey Augmon) and spent the regular season pummeling all comers.

UNLV took a 30-0 record into March Madness and came out with a semifinal loss to Duke — leaving the '76 Indiana Hoosiers as the last perfect team.

"We didn't want to lose. No coach ever does," Tarkanian said last week. "But it might have been better if we had lost one. We never talked about being undefeated, but it was in the papers. Everybody brings it up. It really might help to lose."

If the Rebels, with all their talent, swagger and savvy, struggled with the distractions, how could Stanford possibly cope?

"I would only feel good about it if we were playing well and truly an

unbeatable team, one that met every challenge and had the bravado to dig in and take on all comers," Cardinal assistant Eric Reveno said. "But I don't think that state of mind exists in college basketball. There's too much parity."

The undefeated season, it seems, has put Stanford in a no-win situation.

"Would it be increased pressure in the tournament? Yes, absolutely," Montgomery said. "But I don't want to lose just to get that off us."

Just how realistic is an undefeated regular season?

Stanford has nine games left, plus the Pacific-10 Conference tournament. As soon as the Cardinal thinks it won't lose, it will. It doesn't have enough individual talent to win consistently with modest effort — especially without power forward Justin Davis, who will miss at least three weeks because of a partially torn knee ligament.

But let's assume that Stanford plays hard every game, that it defends well and makes a reasonable percentage of shots. Then what?

Could it become the first Pac-10 team since UCLA in 1978 to run the table?

If so, could it then win three games in three days in the league tournament, where it has lost in the first round the past two years?

Based on venue, matchups and cur-

rent performance, six games would appear to be tougher than others:

- Arizona on Saturday at Maples Pavilion. The Wildcats, whose starting lineup is loaded with NBA prospects, have won their past four games at Maples.

- At Cal on Feb. 14. Stanford has lost two in a row in Berkeley, and the Bears served notice by hanging tough for 28 of 40 minutes of the Maples game a few weeks ago.

- At USC on Feb. 19. Although Arizona is the most talented team left on Stanford's schedule, the Trojans are the toughest matchup because of their quickness, toughness and structureless style. USC has won four of the past seven meetings.

- At Washington on March 6, the season finale. The Huskies are similar to USC in athleticism and style, and they play awfully well at home. Just ask Arizona.

- Two games in the conference tournament. It depends on the draw, of course, but if the Cardinal gets USC or Washington in the first round, then it's looking at three tough games.

Could Stanford go 6 for 6? It's extremely unlikely, but not impossible.

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## SPORTS BRIEF

### Title winners top recruiting trail

NEW YORK — The University of Southern California and LSU, which split the national championship last season, have used that momentum to secure the top two recruiting classes in the country.

The Trojans, who are building a Pac-10 dynasty, not only seized total control of talent-rich Southern California, but also expanded their influence, signing Jeff Byers of Loveland, Colo., the best lineman in the country, Keith Rivers of Lake Mary, Fla., the best linebacker in the country and wide receiver Fred Davis of Toledo, the best wideout in Ohio.

LSU, which got a huge boost when Nick Saban turned down an offer from the Chicago Bears to stay in Baton Rouge, closed the gap between the two co-national champs when the SEC Tigers locked up every good player in their state, including wide receiver Early Doucet of St. Martinville and defensive tackle Marlon Favorite of Harvey West Jefferson. These players are two of the top 15 prospects in the country, according to ESPN's Tom Lemming. Then LSU went to Florida for wide receiver Xavier Carter of Melbourne, Fla., Palm Bay, a Top 10 prospect.

The rest of the Top 10: Florida State, Oklahoma, Michigan, Ohio State, Miami, Texas, Georgia and a tie between Texas A&M and Tennessee.

— Dick Weiss  
New York Daily News

## FIELD

continued from page 13

together to support each other," Vaughn said. "It is such an unusual occurrence that most of us rarely would have to deal with such a grave situation. It really makes us value each other as team members," Vaughn said.

Oregon rugby players would not

comment on Sims' death.

### Finally

Oregon's Club ice hockey team finally found what it had been looking for all season: a win.

On Friday, the Ducks won their first game of the season against Stanford. Oregon, after going 0-16 in league play before last weekend's contest, beat the Cardinal, 13-4, in Palo Alto, Calif.

Going into Saturday's game, Oregon felt confident about its chances against Stanford.

"This was a pretty big game for us," Oregon's Ben Greenberg said. "Both teams expected a lot out of each other and since we had seen their past scores, we knew we were capable of beating them."

Although the Ducks won by nine goals, Stanford dominated the first

period and scored the first goal of the game. Stanford's one-goal lead would be its last as the Ducks scored the next three goals of the game and capitalized on their offensive momentum. Oregon's next goals came only minutes apart. Forward Ben Ziegler spearheaded Oregon's attack and had a career night, recording a seven-point game.

"... We had a lot of energy and a

will to win," Greenberg said.

The Ducks faced the Cardinal again on their second night of action. Instead of running away with the lead, the Ducks found themselves trailing by two goals at the end of the first period. Oregon came back in the second period and finished the game with their second win on the road, 8-7.

Kirsten McEwen is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

## SUCCESS

continued from page 13

basketball player. She grew up training almost every day, working to harness her abundance of natural athletic ability.

It is Haring's love for basketball that has kept her focused in life while traveling around the world.

"She's always had to travel to get to competition and to get to experiences that are going to help her," Smith said. "I just give her a lot of credit for being open-minded and having a vision of what she wants to do and having to go to the most extreme ends of the world to capture that."

On the court, Haring possesses physical talents that can't be taught. Her offensive arsenal includes the ability to create her own shot off the dribble, shoot over the top of a defender and knock down perimeter jump shots.

Haring is the Ducks' third-leading scorer at eight points per game and second-leading rebounder, grabbing nearly four boards per contest. She has reached double figures in scoring in five consecutive games and is second to UCLA's Noelle Quinn in scoring for Pacific-10 Conference freshmen.

Haring is still raw defensively but has improved on her technique as the

season has progressed.

"Eleanor is a tremendously versatile athlete; we can play her at (four different positions)," Smith said. "Offensively, she's a gold mine. Defensively, she still has some work to do in terms of being solid in her stance and using her athleticism and quickness to get to rebounds."

Haring also benefited greatly from her time spent in the Women's National Basketball League. Playing against older, more experienced athletes has made her a smarter player and taught her how to cut down on mental mistakes.

Off the court, Haring said she's a fan of "vegetating," watching "

Finding Nemo" or listening to Coldplay with her roommate, guard Kaela Chapdelaine.

"Eleanor is a great, funny, outgoing person," Chapdelaine said. "She's kind of shy at first but when she gets out of her shell she's so much fun to be around."

Despite being an independent person, Haring still misses not being able to share important moments with her family.

"I miss family and friends but it's more like I miss them because I wish they were here experiencing it with me," Haring said. "It's not like I want to go home ... I don't really get homesick."

While Haring has shown maturity, she has also shown a humorous side.

"We kind of goof around when we're together," said forward Carolyn Ganes, a native of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. "If you look up at the balcony in section 309 and 310, we made Canadian and Australian flags to look at for the national anthem. We thought we were really sneaky."

With three more years at Oregon in front of her, Haring has plenty of time to figure out what she wants to do with her life. Until she figures anything out, there will always be one constant.

"I still feel like a little kid kind of looking up going, 'whoa,'" Haring said. "I just want to play basketball and I'll play as much as I can. Whether that's in the under-40 league at home ... I'll play wherever."

Contact the sports reporter at jonroetman@dailymerald.com.

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