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Struggling Pilots start off weekend for Oregon tennis

The Oregon women's tennis team takes on Portland today

By Alex Tam
Freelance Reporter

One week after the Oregon men swept their three opponents in four days, the women now have their chance to show what they are made of.

DUCK TENNIS

The Ducks (3-0 overall) will try to keep their undefeated home streak alive in a three-matches-in-three-days stretch, including two against nationally ranked teams.

The women will begin play today as they host struggling Portland (0-3 overall) at 9 a.m. and streaking No. 61 Boise State (3-1 overall) at 6 p.m. in the Student Tennis Center. The Ducks will later host 39th-ranked Minnesota (0-2) at 11 a.m. Sunday.

The women so far have started off well in each dual match by sweeping the three doubles matches to earn the first point. The Ducks have a perfect doubles record at 9-0 and are 21-11

overall, which includes the fall season.

Head coach Nils Schyllander said he wants to see that success continue into the weekend against a tough Boise State squad.

"Our doubles play was definitely the highlight of (last weekend)," Schyllander said. "In (Boise State),

"(The Ducks) are very deep and talented at every singles position and they play incredible doubles. I am sure they will continue to move up (in the rankings)."

Mark Tichenor
Boise State head coach

we are facing our stiffest challenge so far. They are well coached and a very dangerous team with lots of firepower."

Boise State has won three straight dual matches in decisive 7-0 victories after losing their season opener to Brigham Young. Broncos head coach Mark Tichenor said his team is ready for the challenge and is fully aware of the potential the Ducks have shown so far in the season.

"They are very deep and talented at every singles position and they play incredible doubles," Tichenor said. "I am sure they will continue to move up (in the rankings)."

The Broncos are headed by senior

Jemima Hayward, who is 3-0 in singles this year and was named the Western Athletic Conference women's tennis Player of the Week after last weekend. Tichenor said the No. 1 singles match-up between Hayward and Oregon junior Daria Panova, who is ranked No. 8 in the country, will be a true test for his best player.

"(Panova) has to be considered one of the top five players in the country right now," Tichenor said. "It will be a monumental challenge for our number one player."

Minnesota has not played well this year after losing its first two dual matches to Rice and Georgia Tech. The Golden Gophers, however, are coming off a season that saw them finish at No. 29 in the country and have a share of the Big Ten Conference regular season championship.

The 26th-ranked doubles team, composed of junior Angela Buerig and sophomore Nischela Reddy, headlines the Minnesota women's squad. They will likely face the No. 18 doubles team of Panova and senior Courtney Nagle.

Schyllander said the depth of his team will be key as each player will need to keep up the consistency they have showed thus far.

"We need to be ready and keep playing our game and focus on the little things that made us successful so far," Schyllander said. "I also think our depth will play a big part in the three-match weekend."

Alex Tam is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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SPORTS BRIEF

Softball opens season today in Florida

The No. 13 Oregon women's softball team travels to the land of sun and sand in Miami to kick off the Ducks' 2004 campaign at the Florida International Tournament.

Oregon will face No. 10 Georgia in the first game at 11 a.m. today. The Ducks also play Florida International. Saturday they play Florida Atlantic and Iowa State.

"This is our first chance to really see the team in an incredibly competitive environment," head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "Obviously, we're going there to win and that's our intent, but just as importantly, it's our chance to find out what our identity is."

In her second year as Oregon coach, Arendsen has 11 returning players, including three seniors, from last season's team that finished one win from a berth in the Women's College World Series.

One returning player missing from Oregon's lineup this weekend is pitcher Amy Harris. The sophomore, Oregon's all-time single-season strikeout leader, injured her wrist in September. Arendsen expects Harris to pitch some innings

at the Fiesta Bowl Tournament next week.

Three pitchers are ready to go today for the Ducks. Senior Anissa Meashintubby, who ranks seventh all-time for Oregon with seven career shutouts, leads Oregon's pitching rotation. Junior transfer Ani Nyhus and junior Lindsey Kontra join Meashintubby in the circle.

Oregon's first opponent today, Georgia, will be out for vengeance. Last year, an unranked Oregon squad upset then-No. 12 Georgia 3-2 in 10 innings.

This year, Arendsen and her club realize they are a marked team with their No. 13 ranking and the unpredicted run they made in the 2003 season. Arendsen believes her team will be able to continue on last season's strong finish.

"We've got to score runs, we've got to play defense and we've got to have our pitchers hitting their spots and staying ahead in the counts," Arendsen said. "If we do that, we'll be just fine. If any of those things don't work, it's going to make it a bit difficult. It's not to say we won't do fine, it's just going to make it harder. If two or three of those things are missing, we're in trouble."


The Ducks play in six preseason tournaments this year.

—Mindi Rice

Hoodoo 23rd Annual

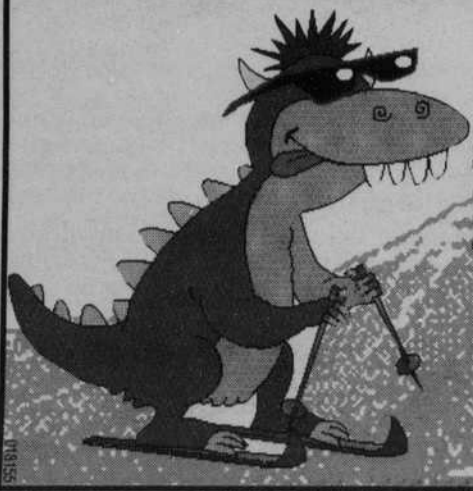
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