

Last year's downfalls weigh on minds of Ducks

The Oregon men and women hope to continue their early season success heading into conference play

By Alex Tam
Freelance Reporter

The current Oregon tennis teams' terrific starts are beginning to resemble the starts of last year.

DUCK TENNIS

The problem: Both the men and women faltered down the stretch last season and do not want a replay of that bad luck this season.

The Oregon men (6-1 overall) started the 2003 season 7-1 but ended up losing 11 of their last 12 dual

matches to finish at 8-12 overall. The Ducks' last win before that streak came against UC-Santa Barbara, which the men will play this coming weekend in Santa Clara, Calif. One reason for the men's good start is the addition of sophomore Markus Schiller, who has solidified the No. 3 and No. 4 positions in the lineup. Schiller transferred to Oregon from Auburn right before the beginning of the dual-match season and has cemented his position behind the top three players, juniors Sven Swinnen and Manuel Kost, and sophomore Thomas Bieri.

Schiller said he is looking forward to the start of the Pacific-10 Conference season, which is coming up after this weekend, but he believes he needs to improve his play if he wants to be successful.

"I think I definitely have to get the intensity a little bit higher," Schiller

said. "I think I did pretty well so far. Pac-10 is a new level. It (has) better

"Last year with Davina out, we had a hole in the middle of our lineup. (Getting) her back has been a huge part of our success. We just need to stay healthy and be lucky in that way and keep plugging away and taking it one match at a time."

Nils Schyllander
Oregon head coach

opponents so I need to get more intense and play even better."

The Oregon women (8-0 overall,

2-0 Pac-10) also began last year 7-1 but subsequently won three of their final 17 dual matches to close with a 10-15 record in 2003.

Oregon head coach Nils Schyllander believes the reason for the downfall last season was injuries, including the season-ending knee surgery to senior Davina Mendiburu. However, this year the Ducks are playing with a healthy team and are beginning to show their potential to rack up an undefeated record.

"Last year with Davina out, we had a hole in the middle of our lineup," Schyllander said. "(Getting) her back has been a huge part of our success. We just need to stay healthy and be lucky in that way and keep plugging away and taking it one match at a time."

Mendiburu has provided quality depth in the lineup and continues to be successful at whatever posi-

tion she plays. Having improved from the No. 5 position to the No. 2 position throughout the course of the year, Mendiburu now has an 8-0 dual match-singles record.

Depth is proving to be a key asset for the women. In addition to Mendiburu's comeback, freshman Dominika Dieskova is fast becoming one of the best players in the conference behind her teammate and reigning Pac-10 Women's Player of the Year, junior Daria Panova. Dieskova earned one of the biggest wins in her career when she defeated Arizona's Diane Hollands in three sets, 6-4, 4-6 and 6-4, last weekend. Hollands is ranked No. 28 nationally in singles.

"I feel like we're deeper this year than we were (last season)," Schyllander said.

Inexperienced Wildcats come to house of horrors

Arizona enters its final road trip of the season and hopes to repeat the 90-66 win over Oregon in January

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

Arizona looks younger, and the Golden Bears play younger.

But that shouldn't matter, says Arizona head coach Lute Olson.

Inexperience has hurt Arizona on the road this season. The Wildcats (16-6 overall, 8-5 Pac-10) have lost four of their five Pacific-10 Conference road games.

"We haven't swept a road trip so far this year," Olson said. "Certainly, that will be a challenge for us to get that

changed. It's important for us to continue building the momentum as we get closer to tournament play."

Arizona begins its final road trip of the season when it plays Oregon at McArthur Court tonight at 7:30. When the Ducks played Arizona in the desert on Jan. 25, they were blown out by 24 points.

But Oregon was without freshman Aaron Brooks at the time and without the 9,087 screaming fans that pack McArthur Court for every home game. Olson knows that playing in Eugene and the possibility of Brooks returning from injury could dramatically change the stakes.

"We know that the environment is something that gives a 15-point advantage (to Oregon) at least with the crowd there," Olson said. "And the other thing

is Aaron Brooks didn't play against us down here and I understand he's going

"We haven't swept a road trip so far yet this year. Certainly, that will be a challenge for us to get that changed."

Lute Olson
Arizona head coach

to play up there."

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent has said Brooks will probably not play, but that's not final.

"It will be a totally different Oregon team if he plays," Olson said.

No. 14 Arizona has only swept the

Oregon road trip once in the last five seasons. The series between the two schools, which dates back to 1979, gives the Wildcats a slight 13-12 edge in games played in Eugene.

Although Arizona may be young, it does not lack talent. The Wildcats are led by sophomores Hassan Adams and Andre Iguodala.

Adams is averaging 16.2 points, 6.9 rebounds and 1.7 assists per game. Iguodala is becoming known as the king of the triple-double.

Iguodala earned his third triple-double of the season in Arizona's 107-83 win against UCLA last weekend. Only California's Jason Kidd earned more triple-doubles, with four, during the 1993-94 season.

Iguodala is averaging 13.2 points, 8.8 rebounds and 5.4 assists per game. Arizona brings an experienced Salim

Stoudamire to the guard spot and center Channing Frye has also stepped up in his junior season.

With only five regular-season conference games remaining for Arizona, each one becomes more important. Arizona is expected to advance to the NCAA Tournament but the count in the win column determines seeding.

"Every game is going to have some effect on the seeding and is going to also have an effect on how many teams the Pac-10 gets in the tournament," Olson said. "Every game is important to every team in the league."

Arizona has lost to Washington and USC on the road this year, and both are teams with worse records than Oregon.

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Future looks bright for Oregon women's basketball

The 2003-04 season has been full of disappointments for the Oregon women's basketball team.

Injuries and inexperience have taken the Ducks from a top 25 team to a squad stuck in eighth place in the Pacific-10 Conference with a 4-10 record.

Five games into the season, Oregon looked like a team bound for the NCAA tournament. Then Cathrine Kraayeveld tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee during practice on Dec. 2. It marked the second time in as many seasons that Kraayeveld missed time because of knee troubles; she missed 13 games last season with a staph infection in her right knee.

The senior forward is by far the team's best player, and without her, the Ducks simply have had no chance to compete in the Pac-10.

With the season coming to a close, it can be painful for Oregon supporters to look back and remember what could have been.

Duck fans can rest easy, however. Good times are ahead.

Despite the fact Oregon owns one of the worst records in the conference, the Ducks will be major players in next season's Pac-10 title race.

Other than general optimism, there are several reasons Duck fans should be looking forward to next season.

- The return of Kraayeveld: No Oregon athlete is more important to the success of his or her team than Kraayeveld is to the women's basketball program.

She's more important than Kellen Clemens is to the football team, Luke Jackson to the men's basketball team or Nicole Garbin to the soccer team.

In the five games she played in before getting injured, the 6-foot-4 senior All-American candidate led the Ducks in scoring (17.2), re-



Jon Roetman
Roughing the passer

bounding (8.6), three-pointers made (11) and total blocks (16).

Since Kraayeveld played in less than 20 percent of her team's games, she was allowed to use this

season as a medical redshirt year.

After missing more than 40 games during two seasons, Kraayeveld will have plenty of pent-up energy to unleash on opponents next year. Her return to the court will make her teammates better and bring back the national respect Oregon was starting to earn.

- Experience: Many of the youthful mistakes that plagued Oregon this year will be gone by the time the Ducks enter next season. All but one Oregon player — guard Kayla Steen — will return for the 2004-05 campaign.

First-year Ducks Corrie Mizusawa, Chelsea Wagner, Eleanor Haring and Jessica Shettlers have had a chance to see what Pac-10 basketball is all about and Andrea Bills, Brandi Davis and Kedzie Gunderson will be a year wiser.

The perimeter game of Wagner

and Davis will thrive with the return of Kraayeveld and Bills will no longer have to carry the entire rebounding burden on her back.

- Incoming talent: Oregon's potent roster will also feature prep star Kristen Forristall. The 6-foot-2 forward is a product of national-power Oregon City High School and held the attention of many recruiters around the nation.

Forristall is currently averaging 17.5 points per game for a team that has won nine of the last 12 state championships.

With all the pieces in place next season, Oregon has a legitimate shot at a Pac-10 title.

It's a good time to be a Duck fan.

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35 seconds into the contest.

Gunderson said she's looking forward to playing Thursday and wants to step up offensively as well.

"I love playing against (Arizona

State) because they pressure and I love to drive on them," Gunderson said. "... I missed out on the first one so I definitely want to get in on the second one and wreak some havoc if I can."

Oregon will likely need a big offensive performance from Wagner if the Ducks are going to hand Arizona

State its second home loss of the season. The Springfield native scored 20 points and knocked down five three-pointers in the season's first meeting, which will likely cause the Sun Devils to keep a defender on her around the perimeter.

McNeill said Wagner will have to play aggressively if she wants to be

an offensive factor.

"The only thing to counteract when someone says 'We're not going to give you a three' is Chelsea is going to have to take the ball to the basket and get fouled," McNeill said. "We will set some screens for her and we will work to penetrate and try to kick to her."

Wagner, who is playing on a torn lateral meniscus in her left knee, said she knows she'll have a tough night in front of her.

"I'm sure they'll overplay me a little more than usual," Wagner said. "I'll just continue to work to get open."

Contact the sports reporter at jonroetman@dailyemerald.com.

SALVAGE

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Dustin Fisher (184-pound class) all pinned their opponents to finish the match and the season on a more

memorable note.

It also marked the first time the team was on the same page on the same night.

It can only be bittersweet for three Oregon wrestlers who were competing in their last regular-season meet-

Harless, Fisher, and Leair all ended their regular season with a victory in impressive fashion.

More importantly, it gives the Ducks something to build on as they prepare themselves for post-season matches.

Oregon will have nearly two weeks off before heading to the Pac-10 Conference Championships on Feb. 29 and March 1. There the Ducks will try to qualify wrestlers for the NCAA tournament, held later in March.

Oregon finished the conference tournament in fifth place a year ago while sending three of its wrestlers on to nationals.

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