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Bruins, Trojans visit Eugene, expect to 'hammer' Ducks

The Ducks will host the top Pac-10 teams in hopes of pulling off an upset

By Clayton Jones
Freelance Reporter

The Oregon men's tennis team will be fighting to put itself into position for an NCAA Tournament berth when it faces two of the top four teams in the country in UCLA and Southern California at home Friday and Saturday, respectively.

"There is a sense of urgency for us to get in the NCAA team tournament because right now we're on the bubble," Oregon head coach Chris Russell said.

Oregon is ranked No. 46 in the country and, with 34 at-large bids available for the 64-team NCAA Tournament, the Ducks could put themselves in a favorable position with an upset over either USC or UCLA.

Fourth-ranked UCLA travels into town today, led by the No. 6 player in the country, Tobias Clemens. The Bruins got a boost last week when junior Luben Pampoulov made his Bruin debut. Pampoulov was a No. 1-ranked junior player in his homeland of Austria and breezed to two straight-set victories in the No. 2 singles position

against Stanford and California.

UCLA brings a deep team to Eugene and is on a five-match winning streak, outscoring its opponents 33-2. All the Bruins' singles players are ranked, with the exception of Pampoulov, and Russell said that will make it a tough match for the Ducks.

"Their depth and experience give them an advantage," Russell said. "They're confident coming in here and expect to drop the hammer on us."

However, Russell believes if his team comes out with the right frame of mind, they can pull off an upset.

"If we have the mentality that this is a great opportunity to pull off an upset and play with enthusiasm instead of trying to play outside ourselves, I think we'll have a chance," Russell said.

The Bruins did lose to Arizona State this season, a team that the Ducks defeated last week.

"Our doubles teams have been playing well and if we can get on them early, you never know what will happen," Russell said.

Russell doesn't expect that his top

two singles players, 35th-ranked Sven Swinnen and 88th-ranked Manuel Kost, will be intimidated.

"Swinn and Manu have won against top-10 players and know what it takes to win these kind of matches," Russell said.

The Ducks face an even bigger challenge Saturday when they face third-ranked USC. The Trojans come with a 16-2 record, their best start since their 1994 national championship season.

USC also has a deep arsenal, with five singles players ranked in the top 100. Leading the way for the Trojans is 23rd-ranked senior Adriano Biasella. Biasella has gone 14-4 this season, including victories over UCLA's Clemens and Stanford's 11th-ranked Sam Warburg.

The Ducks are 0-9 all-time against the Trojans, but almost pulled out a win the last time USC came to town in 2002, losing 4-3.

"We are going to have to come out with our A-game and play to win if we want to be successful against USC," Russell said. "We don't expect them to give us anything and have to play with the mentality that we have nothing to lose."

Clayton Jones is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

CONFIDENT

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Joining Donovan in the 400-meters is junior Sofie Abildtrup, who is seeking to enter Oregon's all-time list in the event. She missed 10th place overall by .06 seconds with a time of 54.76 in early March.

Donovan said that the arrival of Pacific-10 Conference foe Washington only adds to the excitement of the

meet. The West Linn native also said that her team is prepared after already experiencing the feel of a home meet at the Oregon Preview three weeks ago.

"We love it when UW comes down here because it's at our home track," Donovan said. "It's kind of like a rivalry for us. We're ready to put all the points out there on the board and just get it done."

Junior Bree Fuqua is another Duck looking to do well in her two events — the shot put and discus throw. Fuqua, a transfer from Wisconsin, achieved an outdoor season best of 50 feet, 11 1/2 inches in the shot put at the Texas Relays last weekend. However, she will face a tough group of competitors that includes Minnesota junior Aleen Frawley, who leads the field with an outdoor personal best of 53-5 1/2 in 2003.

Fuqua said she has been pleased with her results so far during the spring season. Fuqua, who holds indoor and outdoor shot put records at Wisconsin, is working with new throwers coach Lance Deal to improve her results.

"This outdoor season, I was kind of unsatisfied," Fuqua said. "The shot

put actually went pretty well and the discus has been OK. We changed a few things in the shot put to kind of get back."

In the javelin, Oregon anticipates having little worry about winning the section behind redshirt junior Sarah Malone. Malone, who holds Oregon's school record at 179-7, said that she has changed her training routine during the past week so she doesn't expect to break any records this weekend.

Her strongest opponents are Washington's Megan Spriesterbach and sophomore Tiffany Zahn. Spriesterbach temporarily held the Huskies' school record for the javelin two years ago with a mark of 158-3. Zahn, who attended the same high school as Malone in Newberg, is a former Oregon 4A state champion.

Regardless of that, Malone is confident that she can pull out the victory.

"It's not going to be a huge competition for me," Malone said. "My plan is just to go out and win. I don't think I will have any problem."

Contact the sports reporter at alexam@dailyemerald.com.

UNEXPECTED

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have to schedule a time and I'm used to just walking in there."

Watson's transition was made a little easier when he met Oregon teammate Roderick Dotts. The two had several things in common and hit it off instantly. Dotts grew up 10 minutes east of Watson in East St. Louis, Ill. While the pair didn't know each other growing up, they share the same accent and clothing preferences.

Senior hurdler Brandon Holliday has had to take Watson and Dotts to Portland on several occasions to meet the duo's shopping needs. Both are admitted shopaholics who love buying shoes and bright, baggy clothing.

Watson and Dotts have helped each other adapt to the other surprises in Eugene, besides the lack of shopping outlets, that come with the transition into a new environment.

"Me and (Watson) bonded real fast," Dotts said. "We can relate to each other and spend a lot of time together."

"It was weird meeting the hippies. We don't have that in St. Louis at all." In the field, Watson quickly

garnered respect at the Division I level. He earned All-American status in the long jump (25-2 1/2) during the indoor season and won his outdoor jumping debut in the long jump (25-4 1/2) during the Jim Click Shootout in Tuscon, Ariz.

He will compete in the long jump and the triple jump in tomorrow's Pepsi Team Invitational at Hayward Field. It will be his second appearance at Hayward after winning the 100-meter dash (10.88) during spring break's Oregon Preview.

During his remaining time at Oregon, Watson would like to continue working toward being one of the nation's best in the long jump and the triple jump along with getting his degree in psychology.

Finding a way to adapt to life in Eugene would also be a plus.

"(Watson and I) go to the parties here but we don't really feel 'em a lot," Dotts said. "They're not really fun. We go mostly to talk about how boring it was. It's just a different type of atmosphere, but we're getting used to it."

Contact the sports reporter at jonroetman@dailyemerald.com.

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