

UO tennis takes to the road, seeks NCAA tournament bid

The Oregon men and women visit Washington and California, respectively, in search of cementing postseason bids

By Clayton Jones
Freelance Reporter

The Oregon women's tennis team travels to California for the third time in four weeks to solidify an NCAA Tournament berth Saturday, while the Duck men will be fighting for their NCAA postseason lives against an angry pack of Huskies in Washington.

The Oregon men's tennis team defeated the Huskies in a nonconference dual match earlier this season in Eugene, but Oregon head coach Chris Russell believes Washington will be gunning for the Ducks.

"We're going up there with a big red target on our backs," Russell said.

Oregon's victory over the Huskies marked only the fifth win in 112 tries against Washington. With that win, Oregon goes to Washington confident it can pull off the upset.

"We know how to beat Washington now," 88th-ranked Manuel Kost said. "We need to be prepared and come out with the same energy level."

DUCK TENNIS

Kost gave the Ducks the win over Washington in their last matchup, defeating No. 9 Alex Vlaski.

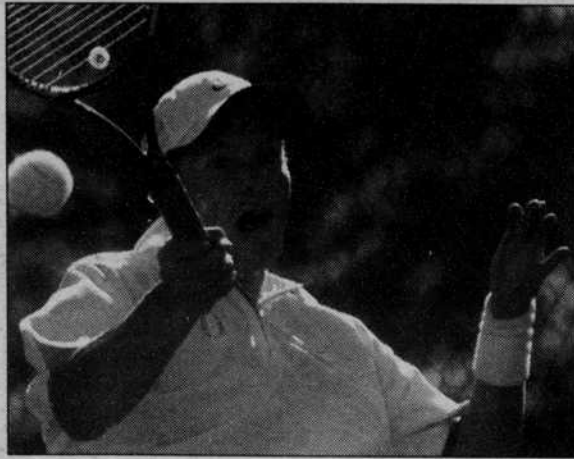
"I hope he (Russell) lets me play Vlaski again," Kost said. "I've beaten him four times in my career and I feel confident."

Oregon junior Sven Swinnen enters Saturday's match having lost one match in the last two months. Swinnen, ranked 35th, has won 10 of his last 11 singles matches, including a win over No. 6 Tobias Clemens of UCLA. Swinnen defeated freshman No. 42 Alex Slovic during the Ducks' prior out against Washington.

"The whole season is going pretty well for me and I think people will be going after me now," Swinnen said. Washington "lost for the first time in Eugene in a long time and I'm sure they want revenge."

Oregon's main concern at this point is getting into the NCAA Tournament, and Russell believes this match is the team's chance to show the tournament committee it belongs.

"If the team wants to be playing in May, this is their chance to make a statement to the NCAA Selection Committee," Russell said. "The Washington match couldn't be a better opportunity."



Danielle Hickey Photo Editor

Manuel Kost will compete for the Ducks Saturday in Washington.

Women look to solidify position

The Oregon women's tennis team is peaking at the right time and looks to finish the season strong in California against Long Beach State and Pepperdine.

"These matches all have postseason implications and we just need to keep our momentum going," Oregon head coach Nils Schyllander said.

Oregon has won five of its past six matches and hopes to continue its steady play.

"We're in a great position and just need to stay focused and play one match at a time," Schyllander said.

The Ducks' strong play has put them into position to contend for an NCAA tournament berth.

"We can't think about that right now," Schyllander said. "That's out of our hands and we need to concentrate on these next two matches."

Freshman Dominika Dieskova comes in with the hot hand for the Ducks, winning six of her last seven matches. She has also moved herself into a tie for third-place on the single-season win list at Oregon with 18.

The road trip also marks the last regular season matches for senior Courtney Nagle.

"This is a big weekend for Courtney because it's her last regular season matches and she's starting to get healthy and play some good tennis," Schyllander said.

Clayton Jones is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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"It helps to push you."

Holliday and A.K. Ikwaokor will compete in the 400 hurdles Sunday. Ikwaokor finished third in the 110 hurdles (14.39) at the Pepsi's, just behind Travis Brandstatter of Minnesota (14.37).

Ryan Andrus will compete in the 10,000 meters for Oregon on Friday. The Orem, Utah native's personal best of 29:11.04 came during the 2003 NCAA Championships.

The senior transfer from Wisconsin, who was also a 2002 cross county All-American, is coming off a sixth place finish in the 1,500 (3:49.64) at the Pepsi's.

Oregon will also compete in the 4x400-meter relay. Potential relay members include Travis Anderson, Scott Lamb, Kedar Inico and Holliday. The quartet finished second (3:11.38) at the Pepsi's.

Inico, a transfer from Barton Community College in Great Bend, Kan., anchored the quartet during the Pepsi's and the Texas Relays.

Anderson is coming off a win in the 400 (47.04) at the Pepsi's, while Lamb, a junior transfer from Mt. Hood Community College, is a former NWAACC champion in the 400.

Other Pacific-10 Conference schools expected to compete at the meet are Arizona, Arizona State,

UCLA, Stanford, Washington State and Southern California.

While several Oregon athletes are competing at the Mt. San Antonio College meet, the Ducks will send freshman Travis Ramme to the Long Beach Invitational to get some extra work in the 100 and 200 this weekend.

A Eugene native, Ramme was one of the area's top sprinters coming out of Sheldon High School in 2003. He placed in the 100 (fourth, 11.08), 200 (third, 22.09) and anchored the 4x400 (3:21.16) state champion in the 2003 4A Oregon state championships.

Contact the sports reporter at jonroetman@dailyemerald.com.

SCRIMMAGE

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there really isn't anybody so we've got to stay in there to take all the reps."

In the secondary, Keith Lewis and Steven Moore are currently preparing for the upcoming NFL Draft. Justin Phinisee and Marley Tucker return as starters.

Add up all of that, and the defense has lost six starters from last season's team. The Ducks are set to return five, but only three are playing prominent roles during the spring.

FYI

Bellotti said the Ducks will practice for up to an hour and a half Saturday before the actual scrimmage. From then on, Oregon will participate in the scrimmage, which is expected to last

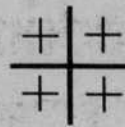
anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour.

In other words, not much will change from last week's workout.

"Some of the things we learned from the first scrimmage, hopefully the mistakes we made, I want to remedy those," Bellotti said. "I want to correct them."

Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

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