

Volleyball: Team-wide service improvements keep opponents on toes

Continued from page 13

The probability of landing a serve decreases as the level of serve increases.

"Our level three and four servers have the highest amount of service errors," Ferreira said. "With our level one and two, we want them to be more conservative with their

location and keep the ball in play."

Coach Ferreira emphasized that he is not looking for his team to commit numerous service errors, but he wants his team to serve aggressively. That approach has given Oregon the most service aces (138) and highest average of aces per game (2.12) in the Pac-10.

A player's rhythm does not stay at a consistent level through an entire match, Ferreira said. The pre-game serve and pass practices allow players to get a feel for their rhythm before they take the floor.

"You have to feel how your body is during a match," Madison said. "Usually, I just start out grooving it, and then as the match progresses, it gets to be more like a level four."

The coaches relay hand signals from the bench to direct where the server should place the ball based on previous scouting reports of the opposing team's positioning or observation of the current match. A service type is often selected based on a server's expertise or consistency with a certain style.

Going through the routine

In order for a player to become a legitimate server, she has to feel comfortable on the floor and develop a routine. Some servers measure their steps from the line, others

bounce the ball, and a few just take a deep breath.

"It's just like with free throws," Rust explained. "You see basketball players have their routine every time they (shoot), it's the same concept."

Rust said the coaching staff gives advice to each server about her routine based on observations made in a match or practice.

"We all give feedback to the players, and each player requires a different approach," Rust said. "Most girls have a routine and a thought process prior to serving."

Toss, spin and jump

Players have an arsenal of serves that provide different results and have different tactical objectives.

Adding top spin to a level four serve makes the ball hard to read because it dips after it crosses the net. To apply top-spin to a volleyball, contact the bottom of the ball and rotate your hand up and over so that it finishes on top. This creates forward

spin, and as the velocity decreases, the ball breaks toward the floor.

A side spin can also be applied to a serve. It makes the ball dip and curve to one side, but requires great wrist movement and good hand control.

Level one and level two floater serves require no break of the server's wrist. A pushing motion is used to limit the amount of spin, which results in an effect similar to a knuckleball.

Whether it's a slide-step jump serve or a flat-footed floater, Oregon has utilized many serve variations to keep its foes guessing.

"I think everybody, at a different level, has definitely improved because we're on top of the conference in aces per game," Rust said. "When training in the offseason, that is one of the things where we wanted everybody to be aggressive, and it's really shined through in the fall."

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Soccer: Injuries plague Oregon forwards

Continued from page 13

Kapaku and Andrea Valadez gave the Ducks a potent attack up front.

"She was one of the most dangerous forwards in the Pac-10," assistant coach John Galas said. "Behind (Nicole) Garbin, she was a player that the (Pac-10) conference had to take notice of."

For her career, French finished with 82 shots, 38 shots on goal, eight goals, three assists, 19 points and two game-winning goals. Her eight goals rank tied for seventh all-time with teammate Andrea Valadez. She is also ninth all-time in points scored and sixth in shots taken.

"I don't think it's really sunk in with the team yet that she isn't going to be playing anymore," Mintz said. "It's sad, because she is a great player, and she has many more great games."

French was player of the year and a first-team all-state pick as a junior

and senior at Mililani High School in Mililani, Hawaii. She was the state co-player of the year and led her team to the state championship in her final season.

French was unavailable for comment.

Time on the bench trend continues

Injuries have been the biggest factor this season for the Ducks. Nearly all players have seen time on the bench, and this week the trend continues. Offensive producers have been hit the hardest. The Ducks' biggest threat, Nicole Garbin, was lost during the spring due to a knee injury. Caitlin Gamble, who is tied for second on the team in goals scored, has been lost for the rest of the year with a stress fracture.

The leading scorer for the Ducks in the 2003 season, Valadez, is listed as

questionable for the Ducks on the road this weekend with an possible ACL injury suffered against Washington. Valadez leads the team this year with shots (31) and is tied for the lead in shots on goal (19).

Other injured players include Dana Richardson, who is day-to-day, and Jen Cameron, who is out for the rest of the season with a high ankle sprain.

Five Pac-10 teams play musical stats

Five conference teams remained in the rankings for this week. According to Soccer America top-25: UCLA moves up to No. 5, Washington jumps to No. 6, California moves into the No. 13 spot, Stanford remains at No. 14 and Arizona moves down to No. 18.

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Scrimmage: Communication needs work

Continued from page 13

"We definitely need to keep working on our communication, and we need to quit turning the ball over as much, and the defense needs to keep moving," Wagner said. "When you put it all together, it's just a lot of little things."

Senior Cathrine Kraayeveld only made a minor contribution

offensively, but played well overall.

"Cathrine provides us with a scoring punch," Smith said. "Her inside and outside game are very important to us but you can see how important defensively she is to us."

Kraayeveld made 2 of 8 shots from the floor but went 0 for 4 from the three-point range. She finished with four points. Her presence

outside spread the defense even more and provided open looks for shooters like Wagner.

"She's a threat everywhere," Wagner said of Kraayeveld. "It makes it fun because then I can just float on the outside when everyone doubles her."

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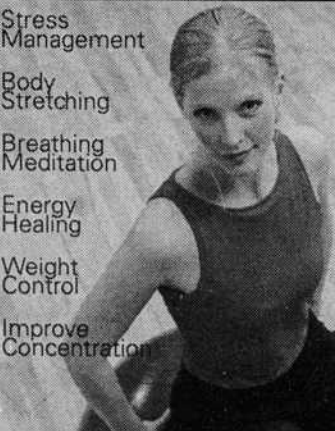


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