

■ Duck tennis

Oregon's tennis aces to compete at nationals

Tennis stars Sven Swinnen and Daria Panova will compete in national indoor tournament

BY ALEX TAM
FREELANCE SPORTS REPORTER

Two members of Oregon's tennis teams have a chance to claim their first singles national championship this weekend.

Sven Swinnen and Daria Panova will each compete in a 32-player field at the Intercollegiate Tennis Association National Indoor Championships in Ann Arbor, Mich., beginning today.

Swinnen, ranked the No. 12 singles player in the nation, received an automatic bid to the national tournament when he claimed the Wilson/ITA West Regional title last week. The 23-year-old Swinnen was the first-ever Oregon men's tennis player to win the title after defeating Matt Loucks of Portland in three sets, 6-2, 3-6 and 6-3.

"I'm going to try and keep playing like I did at regionals," Swinnen said. "I want to stick to my game plan I guess and just hope it works."

Swinnen said he had been battling an ankle injury to begin the season, which caused him to bow out of the first round of the ITA All-American tournament in early October.

"The ankle is good right now," Swinnen said. "Now I feel good and now I'm excited for Michigan."

Oregon assistant coach Ross Duncan said he was impressed with the way his No. 1 player was able to bounce back in a big way and is hopeful he will turn in a good performance at the ITA nationals.

"I have high expectations and high hopes," Duncan said. "Because the tournament is indoors, anyone can beat anyone. Those first couple of rounds are crucial, so I'm kind of hoping he can really get through those and from then on, it's who knows."

On the women's side, Panova received an at-large bid to the ITA national tournament. The 22-year-old Panova is ranked No. 8 in the nation, but was ousted in the third round of the ITA West Regionals to Stanford's Whitney Deason in straight sets, 6-4 and 6-0.

"I did play my best tennis. I think I played like usual, but the girl played really, really good," Panova said. "In the first set, I played OK, but in the second set, she played unbelievable."

Panova is compiling an impressive resume at Oregon. She is the all-time career leader in wins (76) and single-season victories (32 last season). Panova, a senior, also is the owner of three Pacific-10 Conference women's singles titles, including the 2003 indoor and outdoor titles and the 2004 indoor championship.

However, the national championship is one that has slipped out of her grasp in her four years at Oregon. Panova said she struggles to keep her emotions from affecting her matches.

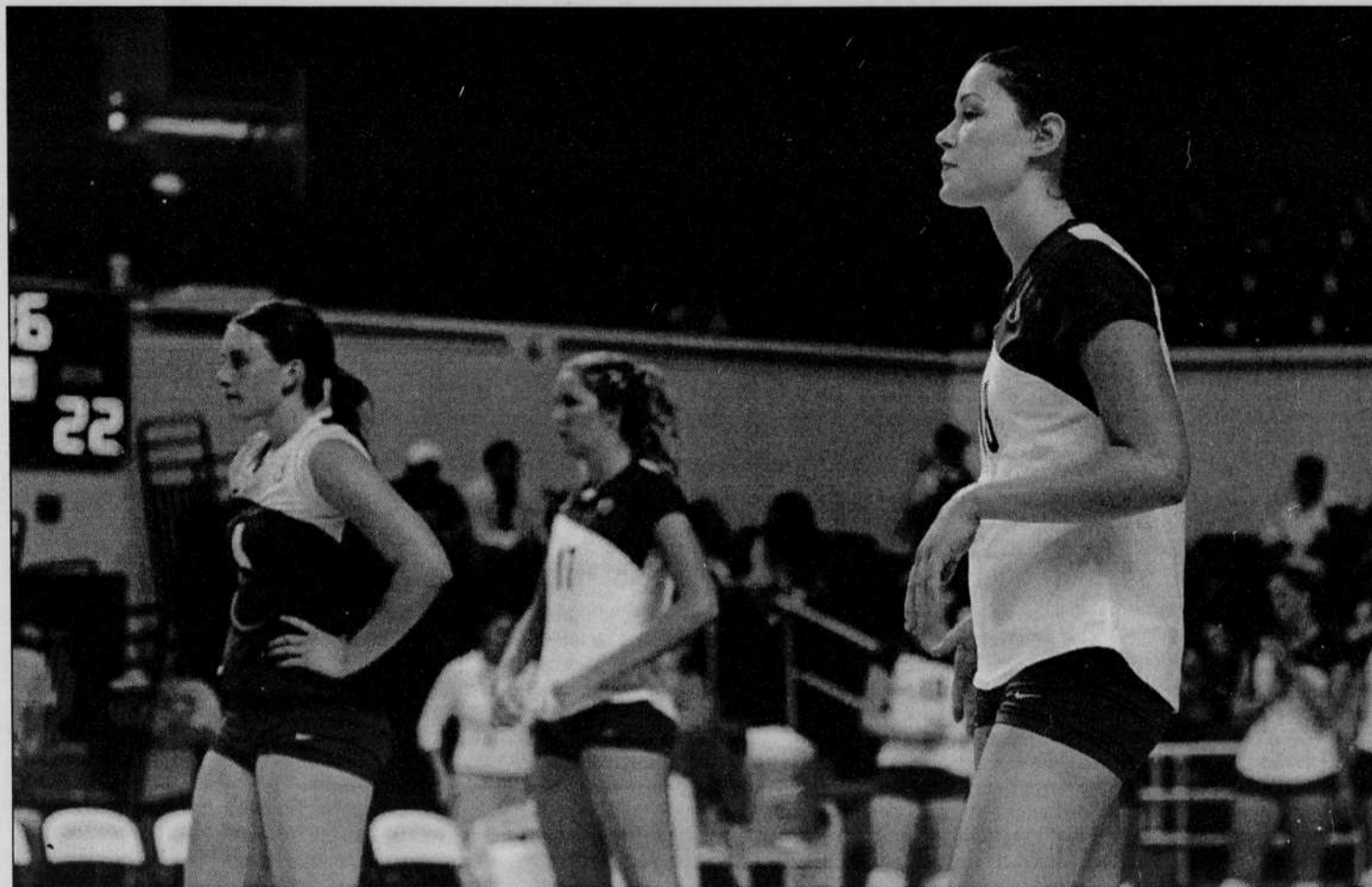
"Even if I lose the first set, I just need to fight until the end," Panova said. "I think I'm ready though."

Panova, a native of Moscow, Russia, said she has high expectations for herself this weekend and hopes to bring home her first singles national title.

"My expectation is to win nationals," Panova said. "I can do it. I believe in myself."

Alex Tam is a freelance reporter for the Daily Emerald

■ Duck volleyball



ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Katie O'Neil, left, and junior Kelly Russell, right, have been the 'anchors' of Oregon's team. Sophomore Sarah Mason, middle, is expected to return from injury this week.

Ducks look to end 8-game skid in desert

Oregon takes on No. 22 Arizona and Arizona State in hopes of picking up much-needed momentum

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

Eight matches remain on Oregon's schedule, with five of its upcoming opponents ranked in the top 25.

The Ducks have surrendered eight consecutive conference matches and they have only won four of 28 games played during the

current stretch.

Oregon head coach Carl Ferreira pinpointed inconsistency and a lack of attack rhythm for his team's depressing offensive slump.

"The thing that we have been truly trying to work on this week is sustaining our point-scoring patience," Ferreira said after practice Tuesday. "I think we have proved

that we can play at the level we want to play at."

Sophomore outside hitter Sarah Mason is expected to return from an ankle injury sustained in practice two weeks ago. According to Ferreira, she was medically cleared to practice on Monday and participated in half of that day's drills. On Tuesday, Ferreira estimated that Mason took part in 70 percent of the practice drills and felt fine.

"It's been fun to have her back in the gym," Ferreira said. "Hopefully she'll be available for us this

upcoming weekend. There's no question that a 6-foot-3 outside hitter is a good thing. I think it will give our whole team a boost."

Ferreira predicts Mason will play in at least part of one game, possibly two, this week. The potency of Mason's attack and her intensity on the floor could give Oregon's offense the shot in the arm it has needed.

"It's definitely been a process and a transition to get ourselves back on our feet without Lauren

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■ Duck soccer

Co-captains to play final games at Oregon

Seniors Christine Mintz and Kelly Baird leave the Ducks with impressive games-played records

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon women's soccer team will send off two of its most experienced players this weekend as the Ducks host Arizona and Arizona State at Papé Field.

Senior co-captains Christine Mintz and Kelly Baird will play their final two matches in an Oregon uniform and will leave as two of the better players in Duck history.

Between them, they have started in 97 matches over seven seasons.

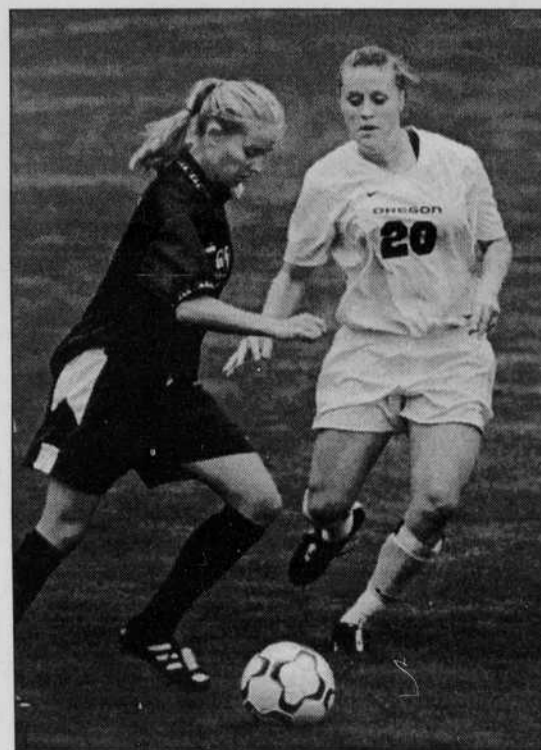
Mintz, after transferring from Connecticut her freshman year, became a team leader with her tough and composed presence in the backfield. She ranks ninth all-time for the Ducks in career starts with 54. She recently had her consecutive games started streak snapped at 47 after receiving a red card against Wyoming last month.

"She transferred from a nationally known program," Oregon head coach Bill Steffen said. "She was giving up some things (tournament berths). She had to step into a different role (on the team) and had to change and I appreciated that."

Mintz is second on the team this season with 1,304 minutes played, and last year in 2003 was the only member for the Ducks (and only one of five in the Pacific-10 conference) to play all 1,816 minutes of the season.

"She's played steady and solid," Steffen said. "The minutes she has given us have been really good for us."

Mintz scored the first two goals of her career earlier in the year — the first came in the 85th minute of their win against Weber State and the second came against



Oregon senior co-captain Kelly Baird, who has battled through a number of injuries, will finish her Duck career this weekend against Arizona and Arizona State at Papé Field.

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