

■ Women's lacrosse

Lacrosse anticipates debut match against veteran team

Oregon hosts the premier Division I lacrosse game in the Pacific Northwest

BY BEAU EASTES
OREGON DAILY FREELANCE REPORTER

The players are getting restless. After a season of fall scrimmages and a winter of weight lifting, Oregon's 18th varsity sport will officially be unveiled when the women's lacrosse program debuts Saturday at 12 p.m. against Stanford at Papé Field.

"We want to see what we can really do," assistant coach Robert Bray Jr. said.

Oregon's lacrosse odyssey began in July 2003. Following a 21-month study directed by Senior Associate Athletics Director Renee Baumgartner, the traditionally east coast sport of lacrosse was chosen as the Ducks' 10th women's varsity athletic program. Head coach Jen Larsen was hired and handed the task of assembling a squad to compete in the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation in fewer than two years.

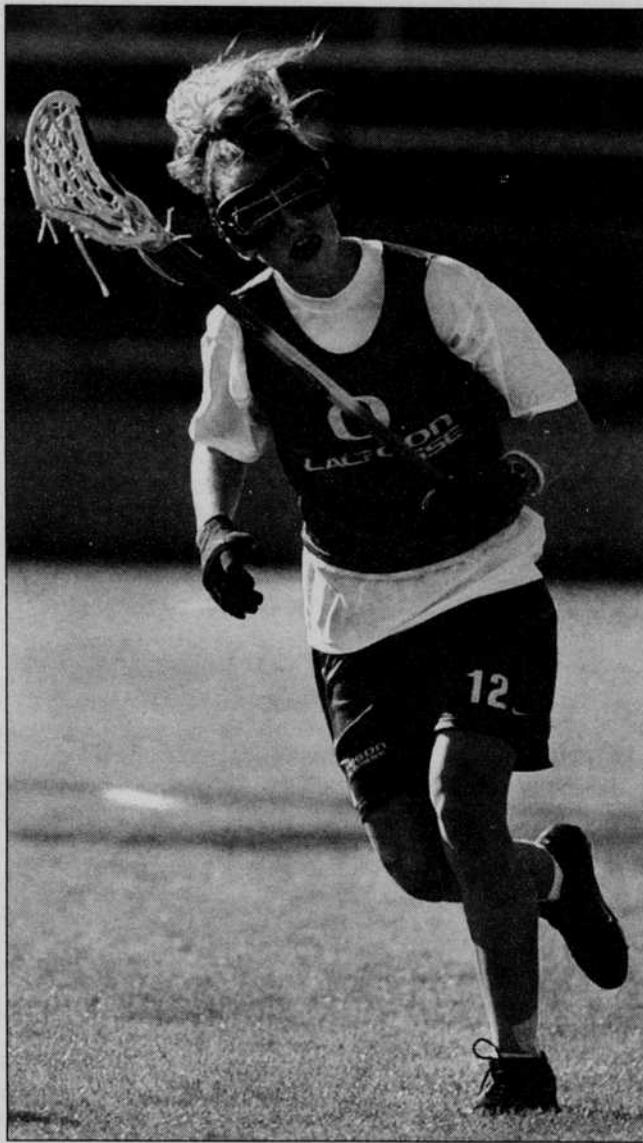
The Ducks are now just a day away from taking the field in a game that will finally count in the standings.

"It's going to be amazing to go out there and play against somebody else," freshman midfielder Jenny Browne said.

The Ducks, all of whom will be getting their first varsity collegiate experience Saturday, have been competing with each other day in and day out since a handful of inter-collegiate scrimmages in the fall.

"(We're) excited because we've gone through the majority of the fall season, the whole winter season and now for three weeks of the spring just playing each other," Jen May, a high school All-American from Davidsonville, Md., said.

Staying true to Larsen's "you got to play the best to be the best" attitude, the Ducks open the year with a veteran Stanford squad. The Cardinal, 9-9 last season and 4-0 in the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation, returns 13 players — including last year's team points leader Megan Burkner (30 goals, 11 assists), and three-year midfield starters Nina Pantano and Kelsey Twist. Under Michele Uhlfelder, the 2004 MPSF Co-Coach of the Year, the Cardinal



ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

Freshman Jen May and the rest of her Duck teammates will play in Oregon's first-ever varsity lacrosse match Saturday against Stanford at 12 p.m. at Papé Field.

became the first west coast team to be ranked in the top 20 national rankings in 2001. Last year Stanford started the season ranked No. 14 and narrowly missed a chance to make the post-season with an unexpected loss to California in the MPSF Championship game. The defeat was the Cardinal's first loss in four seasons to a conference opponent.

Although Stanford appears to be a heavy favorite entering this weekend's contest, Uhlfelder refuses look past the game.

"We approach every game the same way," the fifth-year coach said. "(Actually) we're as excited as Oregon is."

Larsen plans to pressure Stanford on defense, using man-to-man

coverage that allows players to jump from opponent to opponent in the attempt to trap the ball. On the offensive end, Larsen looks to employ basic fundamentals early on in the season.

"(We're) having them understand the ball needs to move and they need to move," she said.

Larsen and her staff favor a more flowing and non-scripted offensive game plan because of the youthful nature of their team.

"We're very against scripted plays because the second something doesn't go right we have a group of freshman that might not be able to improvise," she said. Instead of set plays, the coaching staff has been working with the Ducks to "be creative, find different looks."

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