

*"I think that dodgeball derailed an entire generation of Americans. It's the true red menace."*

Art Jones, director of the movie "Dodgeball"

## Bitter, rivals square off in Roseburg reunion

*Kristin Bitter and two former Roseburg High School teammates meet in Duck volleyball's version of the Civil War this evening at OSU*

BY JEFFREY DRANSFELDT  
SPORTS REPORTER

Volleyball tied them together as teammates at a small-town high school, and now Kristen Bitter, Lindsay Bartholomew and Natalie Hooper take the same court once again — two as teammates and another as an opponent.

Oregon's volleyball team, including Bitter, faces rival Oregon State and newcomers Bartholomew and Hooper today — all graduates of Roseburg High. Both schools, Oregon (10-7 overall, 0-6 conference) and Oregon State (5-7, 1-5) are trying to recover from difficult starts to conference play.

The match is set for 7 p.m. in Corvallis.

Oregon State is Oregon's first unranked opponent after playing five consecutive ranked teams, but Bitter said the Ducks expect a challenge, having lost eight out of the last 10 matches to Oregon State since 2000.

"They always get up for us, every year," Bitter said.

Bitter is the oldest and most seasoned of the trio meeting tonight. Oregon State's Hooper is a freshman, and sophomore Bartholomew joined the Beavers this season after a year at Linn-Benton Community College in Albany.

Both made it as walk-ons, which makes the match more meaningful, Bitter said.

"I'm so proud of both of them," Bitter added. "I'm so happy to find out they're on the team and doing well."

Her stay at Linn-Benton was short, Bartholomew said, after breaking her collarbone and separating her left shoulder early in the year. Never fully healthy that season, and seeking a challenge, Bartholomew chose to make the jump to Oregon State and Division I volleyball.

Five-foot-4 Hooper entered her initial collegiate season after a decorated high school career. She was first-team All-Southern League as a junior and senior and guided Roseburg to

a sixth-place finish in the state tournament last season.

Playing as a defensive specialist/libero, Hooper has emerged recently, earning more playing time and experiencing the Pacific-10 Conference for the first time. In two losses to both Los Angeles schools last weekend, Hooper played three games each against USC and UCLA, contributing eight digs against the Bruins.

"She's a perfect person for that position," Bartholomew said.

Hooper didn't attend Oregon State's first win against Arizona State in Tempe as the coaching staff contemplated whether or not to redshirt her.

She is glad they didn't.

"It's incredible," Hooper said of playing in the Pac-10. "It's the best feeling to know you're playing at such a high level."

Bitter came to Oregon from Roseburg, a small city of about 20,000 people. This wasn't the large scale of a Portland or Seattle, but a smaller town where sports were the thing to do.

Bitter compares Roseburg's atmosphere to "Varsity Blues," the 1999 movie — starring James Van Der Beek and Jon Voight — about a small Texas town where football is life.

"You're really encouraged to play as many sports as you can, and when it's game night, everybody knows," Bitter said.

Her sports were volleyball, basketball and track and field. Bitter's athletic success wasn't limited to one sport, but varied as she competed in long jump, high jump and triple jump in track and was part of the basketball team's first outright Southern Conference title since 1987 in her senior year in 2003.

With her large frame and talent, Bitter was a heavily recruited volleyball player out of high school. The athlete had a lengthy list of suitors including Tennessee, Northwestern, Florida, Virginia Tech, Arizona, Cal-Poly San



NICOLE BARKER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon's 6-foot-4 middle blocker Kristen Bitter, right, prepares for an Oregon serve alongside Erin Little in a Pacific-10 Conference match against Cal.

Luis Obispo, Oregon State, Portland State and Colorado State.

Whittling the list down to Arizona and Ore-

gon, Bitter chose the Ducks in the fall of 2002 and joined a recruiting class including setter

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## Midnight Madness returns to Oregon

*ESPNU comes to McArthur Court for the first time since 1997 this Friday to see both the men's and women's teams open play*

BY JEFFREY DRANSFELDT  
SPORTS REPORTER

It's the first opportunity to show off that new move learned over the summer, the new standout teammate or even an improved jump shot.

Oregon's men's and women's basketball teams will showcase their new looks tonight in front of Duck fans at McArthur Court.

Oregon women will practice from 8 to 9 p.m. before the men take the court immediately after.

Doors open at 7 p.m. for Duck students wearing wrist bands for distribution of the Pit Crew T-shirts. Bands can be picked up at 9 a.m. at the EMU. Doors will open to the general public at 7 p.m., with the first 1,000 fans receiving a "Midnight Madness" T-shirt. Admission for the event is free.

Between 7:30 and 8 p.m., fan contests will take place before the women's basketball team begins its practice.

The men's practice is part of a live national broadcast by ESPNU — the first time since 1997 Oregon's Midnight Madness has been shown on one of ESPN's channels. Kansas, Kentucky, Memphis and Michigan State will also be featured.

Commentators Rich Cellini and Bob Wenzel are hosting the practice, which will be featured for 60 minutes.

Fans have reason to be optimistic about the men's program, with sophomore Malik Hair-

ston leading a maturing team. Friday night also marks the debut of highly-touted transfer Ivan Johnson, a late addition from Los Angeles Southwest College in Southern California.

Johnson, who originally committed to Cincinnati and Bob Huggins, changed his mind after the embattled coach was fired in August.

A spot opened up when Oregon coach Ernie Kent's son Jordan Kent joined the football team and transferred his scholarship.

The disappointment from underachieving last season has Oregon excited to start this season, but also more knowledgeable from having gone through it.

"We are hungry," Hairston said Wednesday at media day. "We understand what it takes."

With six straight home games to start the 2005-06 season, this team has an opportunity to have a strong start and erase bad memories of last season.

"Moving on with a fresh start is a great feeling," Hairston said.

While Friday is the official day to start practices, the men's and women's teams have started earlier this year with a new NCAA rule. The new rule, referred to by the NCAA as a "skill development rule," was put into place in August.

Both the men's and women's basketball associations pushed for the changes that led to pre-Oct. 15 team practices. Women can practice for four hours a week and the men

for two.

The extra time has been a boon for the women's team, said head coach Bev Smith. Now, when practices start they can smoothly transition into harder areas, or the meat and potatoes, as Smith put it.

"I think it's really been good for them," Smith said. "There's some opportunity to sit back and see the whole picture."

The incoming roster is veteran-laden, but almost always with college athletics, rosters evolve and there are new players. Oregon's 13-women squad is an exception, with five seniors and four juniors.

It is a new season and the extra time has helped build team chemistry, Smith said.

"They know each other much better as a team," Smith added.

In addition to building team cohesiveness, the new rules have had smaller benefits.

Senior forward Yadi Okwumabua is recovering from off-season knee surgery, and the extra time has allowed her to ease back into playing basketball again.

The rule allows this year's lone freshman, Tamika Nurse, and future freshmen to see "how they fit in and how (they) can contribute to the team," Smith said.

Having no Division I experience, new assistant coach Phil Brown has received a quick introduction.

Smith believes it should make for an exciting opening night. Fans will see a "couple of a new additions that will change how we play in terms of tempo and how we play the game," Smith said.

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## Ducks hope for rebound this week vs. UCLA Bruins

*Nicole Garbin and the rest of the Ducks try to get back on track after a down weekend*

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS  
SPORTS REPORTER

Oregon begins its second weekend of conference play tonight against No. 4 UCLA as head coach Tara Erickson and her Ducks try to rebound after last week's losses to Arizona and Arizona State. Although a victory tonight over the Bruins seems next to impossible, Erickson would like to see her team keep pace with the Bruins (11-1 overall, 1-0 conference).

"Obviously we made some big mistakes last weekend, and the end result was a pair of losses," Erickson said. "We'd like to get back to playing with the improvements we've made lately. All week we've been trying to work on matching up on defense and playing within our system. UCLA is an amazing team and we'll have to defend our best."

To compensate for UCLA's high-powered

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