

Women's Recruiting News

by Jerry Thompson

Top In-State Women Choose to stay close to Home

Alicia Cook

Elmira's Alicia Cook was pitching softballs against the gym wall since she was 5 or 6 years old and had watched her older sister Jenny pitch successfully for the Oregon Ducks. Some thought it was almost predestined for Alicia, the defending state 3A hurler for the Falcons, to become a Duck. Not so, said Alicia's mother, Pam Cook, who has coached the Elmira softball team for the past twelve years. She said Alicia's biggest reservation for choosing the Ducks would be following her sister and not establishing her own identity. Beyond that, Cook, who was 23-0 last year, could have gone to any of the big softball powers in the nation, including UCLA, Arizona, Cal, etc. So why did the Cook choose the Ducks?

Alicia told *DI* that she really liked the new Oregon coaches, Kathy Arendsen, J. Gaudreau, and Mike White. "I connected with the coaches who are really nice. It just felt right," Alicia said. Pam elaborated on Alicia's decision saying that the Oregon coaches were "wonderful" and answered all her questions and concerns. The Cooks had witnessed first hand the ups, and mainly downs, of the Oregon softball program and they were encouraged, not only by last year's

surprise season, but they were impressed with that fact that the Oregon players were happy and "playing with smiles". They said it was evident that the players liked each other and were having fun. Alicia knows very well the huge time commitment that softball requires and she wanted to be sure that it was not just all business without any fun. Pam put it this way: "The players play for Kathy."

Alicia said that being close to home was an important factor. She wanted her family to be able to see her play and to be able to come home on weekends and watch her nephew, Jenny's son, grow up. Alicia could have opted for Oregon State and still have been able to do the above, but she felt more comfortable with the Oregon program. The Ducks contacted Cook this summer on the first day allowed by the NCAA and Alicia took a couple of weeks to make sure she was making the right decision for here. She verbally committed near the end of July.

Alicia is a senior at Elmira and at 5'11" she is enjoying playing on the Falcon basketball team. In softball they are looking to repeat this spring. They lost by a score of just 1-0 in 2002, but last year Alicia pitched and won the state championship game. Athletic Director John Guldager said that Alicia has "gutted out" some injuries as she has had rotator cuff surgery in the past as well as knee surgery. He was quick to point out that she came back well from it and led her team to the state title. "Alicia is very talented and highly motivated," Guldager stated. Alicia said that she has 5 pitches in her repertoire: rise, drop, curve, screwball, and changeup. She said her favorite 0-2 "out" pitch is the curve.

The future bodes well for the Ducks since pitching is such a big part of softball. Oregon is excited that they have been able to add Cook along with last year's freshman ace, Amy Harris, from North Eugene. The goal is to keep signing the best players from the state of Oregon for years to come. Who knows, there may be a girl just starting elementary school who has already started throwing softballs against the wall and has begun to dream. Alicia Cook would do



Alicia Cook

nothing but encourage her-she knows that dreams do come true.

Kristen Forristall

The player who many consider the top high school women's basketball player in the state of Oregon has chosen to join Bev Smith's program which continues to emphasize signing the state's top players. Last year the Ducks added two Portlanders, 6'6" Jessica Shetters from Wilson and point guard Cicely Oaks from Grant. On the November 12th early signing date the Oregon women's basketball program enriched their program with the addition of 6'2" Kristen Forristall from perennial state champion Oregon City. Kristen is just beginning her senior year for the Pioneers where playing time is very limited as they get all the players "into the act". Kristen has led Oregon City in scoring and rebounding during the last two seasons. Last year Forristall averaged 12.5 points per game and 9 rebounds while averaging just 17

minutes of play (a high school game is 32 minutes long). The Pioneers under long time coach Carl Tinsely, who retired at the end of last school year, won 9 of the last 12 state championships. This year they will be coached by Brad Smith. It looks like for at least the next 5 years Forristall will have a "Smith" as her head coach. In addition, Kristen is the first player from Oregon City in 7 years to sign on with the Ducks. Brianne Meharry was the latest.

With her success on the basketball floor as well as the classroom (3.92 g.p.a.), Forristall had many choices before her as a student athlete. Kristen told *DI* that Oregon was the first to contact her a couple of years ago and they remained very interested in her. Indiana, Boston College, and Vanderbilt also came calling and Forristall admitted that there was no wrong choice to be made with any of those schools. She narrowed it down to Oregon and Vanderbilt, both of whom she characterized as having very competitive teams with good team camaraderie. "I chose Oregon because it was closer to home and I wanted to represent my home state," Kristen stated. Academically, Forristall plans on majoring in sports marketing or advertising.

So, what kind of player is Kristen? "I see myself as a "3", a perimeter player who can slash to the inside," Forristall said. Kristen should be able to use her size and speed to her advantage against smaller guards. Another reason Oregon is excited to get Forristall is that she plays both ends of the floor. She plays with the passion needed for defense and rebounding.

Forristall has played for some summer all-star teams and she said she is going to enjoy the competition between players in the Pac-10 with whom she has already played with or against. She mentioned Candice Wiggins who opted for Stanford, Jackie Holland at Washington, and Lauren Patterson and Lindsey Plummer at UCLA. It looks as if Bev Smith's improving program has added a player who will make sure in the near future that the other Pac-10 schools will know what competition is all about when they play Oregon. **O**



Kristen Forristall

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