

# MidWeek

## Kaneohe Coach Preps First Women's Team

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By Jack Danilewicz



Cory O'Dell (left) at a men's basketball game during the Maui Invitational. Photo from Stacia Garlach.

A long-standing challenge for every basketball coach at Chaminade has always been recruiting players via phone and without the benefit of a budget that allows for visits to its cozy Kaimuki campus.

The word "Hawaii" gets a recruit's attention, of course, not to mention the parents, said first-year women's coach Cory O'Dell, who lives in Kaneohe.

"The Hawaii sell is always there, but what I've talked to them about is how this is an opportunity to establish a program and establish an identity. Very few people will ever have that opportunity. It's a chance to be part of something special."

While the school's inaugural women's basketball season is weeks away, enthusiasm already abounds at the Catholic college, where O'Dell's team will hold its first official practice Sunday.

"It's been an incredibly busy time in an incredibly positive way," said O'Dell. "I can't begin to explain the energy on campus. Every department here is enthusiastic. They've been very supportive."

His 13-member roster includes players from Washington, Oregon, Wyoming, Michigan, California, Ohio and

Hawaii, in addition to Guam and Mexico. Since he was appointed coach in May, O'Dell has been heavily involved in the recruiting process. Except for its four in-state recruits, all his players found their way to Oahu "sight unseen."

"I've talked to an enormous amount of kids on the Mainland," said O'Dell, a University of Hawaii graduate and native of Talkeetna, Alaska. "We knew we had to bring in some kids who had a base, so we've talked a lot to kids from junior colleges. It's been a unique experience.

"We'll have a team, rather than a bunch of individuals. We aren't going to have the premium athletes because we started in May and have limited scholarships to offer - we recruited student-athletes who are willing to work as a team."

O'Dell comes to Chaminade's women's program from its men's program, where he was an assistant the past three years to Matt Mahar and before him, Aaron Griess. He also spent five years as a women's assistant to Jerry McLaughlin at the University of Alaska-Anchorage.

"Jerry (McLaughlin) really took me under his wing and exposed me to all aspects of coaching," O'Dell said. "He taught me more than X's and O's, and both Matt and Aaron were awesome in helping me with the transition from women's to men's basketball. The combination of coaching the two helped me to take the best (aspects of coaching) from both. I'm thankful to both Matt and Aaron."

The Silverswords will get an early start, literally, for the 2006-07 season. Practices will run from 6 to 8 a.m. daily at McCabe Gymnasium.

"It has its benefits and its downfalls, but the benefits far outweigh pitfalls," O'Dell said. "When you start your day off with basketball, you don't have the usual stress. You don't come into practice having already attended three classes. You come in fresh (mentally)."

The Silverswords make their debut Nov. 21 at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, WA. And Nov. 24-25, they play in the Mount McKinley Bank North Star Invitational in Fairbanks, Alaska, an event O'Dell hopes will be a big boost to recruiting in the future.

"It's a first-class tournament, so it's special to be involved in," O'Dell said. "None of our kids has been to Alaska before, and like Hawaii, Alaska has some of the best women's basketball talent in the country."

Chaminade begins play against the other Hawaii schools on December 3rd, when the Silverswords host Hawaii Pacific at McCabe. While competition on the Island promises to be fierce, as in men's basketball, Hawaii's small college women's coaches have already formed a unique bond.

"We'll all compete with each other, but we're all supporting each other in wanting this to be successful," O'Dell said.

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