

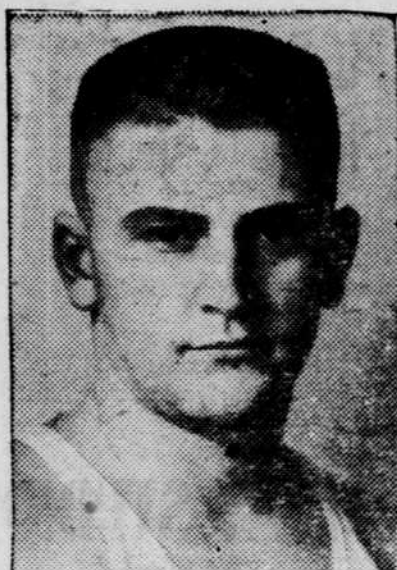
EMERALD Sports

Duck Tracks

By Jerry Claussen
Emerald Sports Writer

As Northern Division basketball rolls into its 33rd and last season before becoming part of a Pacific Coast basketball league in 1956, there's a big 7' 3" question mark in figuring out how the five teams will finish in March. The question is, of course, Swede Halbrook.

Having missed Oregon State's 10 pre-conference games due to classroom troubles, the Beavers' oversized center is way behind in practice for this season's Conference play. The defending champion Beavers have been tabbed as shoo-ins for the title again by virtually everybody, but the predictions were based on Halbrook's full-time participation.



RON ROBINS
OSC Guard's Final Year

Without the big center, Slat's Gill's team is still dangerous, but hot-and-cold. Forward Jay Dean is their only consistent performer and he is not a big scoring threat. Tony Vlastelica was top scorer in pre-conference play but his average will go down with Halbrook's return. Improved Ron Robins at guard is about the only other Beaver above average. Seven-foot Phil Shadoin is still a year away.

But the Beavers showed one thing in pre-conference games that makes them look like probable winners — defense. Through the end of December

Oregon State led the nation in defense with 51.4 points allowed per game, 12 better than their closest ND rival. Gill will make this Scotch attitude of the Beavers pay off in the next two months.

Huskies Second Best

Based on pre-conference performance, Washington's Huskies loom as the team most likely to succeed Oregon State in case the Beavers falter during the 16-game grind. Tippy Dye's club won six out of nine contests played in December including the ND classic at Seattle last week where they nipped the Beavers in an overtime game.

Center Dean Parsons is back again leading the Husky club which finished well last season after a poor start with a big crop of sophomores. The rest of last year's starters also return and each is a potential threat with Jim Coshaw and Karl Voegtlin at forwards and Doyle Perkins and Jerry Johnson at guards. This club will make it tough.

Ducks Have Problems

Oregon seems destined to finish somewhere in the middle of the pack after losing Ed Halberg, Ken Wegner and Barney Holland. Coach Bill Borchers has a big problem at the guard spots where lack of scoring punch and the loss of Dick James has hurt the sophomore-dominated team considerably. Jim Loscufoff has been a bright spot and the team improved on their trip east, but lack of experience may tell the tale.

Washington State has a veteran team back this year after a 1954 season in which they finished a poor last in the ND. All-Conference Ron Bennink and Center Bill Rehder have given the Cougars scoring punch in games so far. Coach Jack Friel's club has a 6-3 record and looked good in beating Idaho last week. The Cougars could be a surprise.

Compared with the other clubs, Idaho is on the bottom on paper. Last year's coach, Chuck Finley, left for Mississippi Southern, and took All-Conference Bob Garrison plus Center Orin Fulton along with him to rob the Vandals of some much-needed depth. Forwards Harlan Melton and Jay Buhler, the football player, are Coach Harlan Hodges' top scorers and the first team has a lot of potential. The club is handicapped by lack of height, though, and is slow. Idaho is a definite dark-horse, however.

DANCING IN THE STREETS

Tall Firs' NCAA Win Brought Celebration

By Jerry Claussen
Emerald Sports Writer

They danced in the streets of Eugene that night — that cool, clear Monday evening in the spring of 1939 when Oregon's Ducks became the kings of the basketball world.

Three thousand Oregon students and the rest of the nation had been waiting for the result. When the score came in from

this Oregon championship team of 1939.

Top scorer for the team was Lauren (Laddie) Gale, the 6' 4" senior forward. His ham-like hands could palm a basketball with ease and his great one-handed shots from either side, together with his cool leadership, had writers comparing him to Stanford's great Hank Luisetti.

Urgel (Slim) Wintermute was the Ducks' giant, 6' 8" center. He was one of the biggest men in basketball that year and was a primary reason for the team's nickname, "The Tall Firs." The Eugene senior was second only to Gale in scoring.

Astoria's "Gold Dust Twins" of Captain Bobby Anet and Wally Johansen held down the starting guard spots on the team. Working together was an easy task for these two senior speedsters, who had played with each other 11 years before starting their final season at Oregon. The stocky, 5' 8" Anet and the blond Johansen were both brilliant floor-men.

Fifth man for Hobson, now coach at Yale, was 6' 4" John Dick, a 200-pounder from The Dalles and the only junior on the first five. He had not been rated high at the beginning of the season but his aggressive play soon earned him a starter's berth where he became the squad's third highest scorer. He later won the ND scoring title in his senior year.

Sarpola Also Played

Filling out the 11 man championship squad was Ted Sarpola, the fastest man on the team and later coach in his home town of Astoria; big Earl Sandness, a sophomore and the fourth of the Astoria "Flying Finns"; Matt Pavallunas and Earl (Red) Mc-Neeley from Portland; Bob Hardy, an Ashland product, and Ford Mullen, the only non-Oregonian on the team and later a professional baseball player.

Anet, Johansen and Mullen were the only men on the squad standing less than six feet, but opponents found that the best way to beat the Ducks was to out-run them. Oregon always relied on their fast-break-style offense, even though it's tall front line was ideal for ball-control basketball.

Oregon opened the 1938-39 season by winning four straight from amateur Portland teams, then embarked on a 7000-mile trip into the middle-west and east, where they played single games in nine different cities and won six of them. The Ducks were probably most brilliant in defeat when they bowed to CCNY, a school with 31,000 students, by two points before 16,500 in Madison Square Garden.

The team hit its stride after an opening-series split with Washington State in ND play. Gale led the way as Oregon won ten straight conference games, including two wins over previously undefeated Washington to take over the loop's leadership. The Ducks got overconfident and lost one to Oregon State, but they bounced back to sweep the final Washington series and clinch the crown.

Trio Were All-Stars

After that there was no stopping Hobson's boys. They rolled over California in two straight for the coast conference title and then knocked off strong Texas and Oklahoma teams in easy fashion for the Western Regional crown. Dick, Wintermute, and Gale were picked on the all-West tournament team, the latter two having already been chosen for conference all-star honors.

The championship game was no contest as the Ducks led the Big Ten champion Buckeyes all the way in the 46-33 lacing. It was a routine victory for the Oregon club and its 18th win in its last 19 outings.

For the season the Ducks won 29 games while losing only five and averaged 58.4 points-per-game against a fine 38.1 defensive average. Gale won the ND scoring championship for the second straight year with 186 tallies, one short of the record. The team played before 158,600 fans in 17 cities, with 19 sellout crowds.

The five famous jerseys of the first team were later retired, never again to be worn by Oregon players. The lemon-and-green uniforms were new that year and the familiar numbers 18, 20, 22, 28 and 32 now adorn a showcase in McArthur court together with the trophies won by the team.



SLIM WINTERMUTE
Tallist Fir

Evanston, Ill., it read: Oregon 46, Ohio State 33. Bedlam broke loose in Eugene.

The Oregon victory bell was placed at the intersection of Willamette and Broadway where its chimes drowned out the horns of stalled traffic. Students invaded the McDonald theater to shout the news to surprised movie-goers.

History doesn't say what kind of tree it was that students felled across 11th street's fraternity row to block traffic for the dancing, but it really should have been a tall fir. For it was an Oregon team of "Tall Firs" that forgot early-season defeat and overcame every obstacle to become the first NCAA basketball champions in history.

This bunch of Oregon kids hadn't been the underdogs, however. In fact, this team from the little school out in Oregon had shown so much improvement during the season that they were given the favorite's role from the time they clinched the coast conference title, their first since 1919.

Hobson Coached Firs

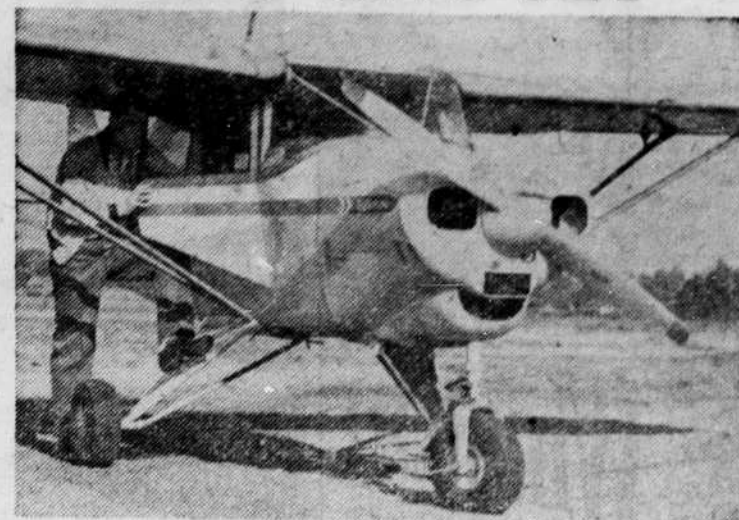
Coach Howard Hobson, a former captain and all-coast performer for the 1925 and 1926 Duck cage teams, took this squad of veterans through a 34-game grind to reach the throne-room of college basketball. This was the biggest schedule in Oregon's history, but it put the team in razor-sharp condition for the national playoffs.

In the final game Oregon was a far cry from the sloppy aggregation of early December when Hobson moaned that "we're not half good enough to rate a cellar berth" in the Northern Division. The boys, proved the wily Hobson wrong, however.

They were an unusual combination, and yet a natural one,

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