

Duck Cagers Claim Classic Crown

By STAN HORTON
Of the Emerald

PORTLAND (Special) — To his teammates Billy Gaskins is known as "The Chief"—to Oregon basketball fans he is known as the man who literally "stole" the Ducks to their first Far West Classic championship during the Christmas holidays.

It was Gaskins' steal of a Washington State pass in the final stages of the championship game that led Oregon to the tourney title.

The Cougars had possession of the ball with the score tied 78-78 with 10 seconds left in the game. Gaskins stole a Lenny Allen pass and drove the length of the floor before a WSU defender knocked the ball out of bounds. With just three seconds showing on the clock, Rick Abrahamson bounced a pass to Jimmy Henry in the corner who hit a 20-foot jumper as time ran out.

Gaskins, who was chosen the most valuable player of the Classic by a vote of the coaches, was not only instrumental in the final game but played an important role in the Ducks' opening win over Yale, 84-71 and an 82-74 overtime upset victory over Brigham Young.

Yale Defeated

Oregon was definitely considered a dark horse for the Classic title when they met Yale in the second game of the eight-game tourney.

The Ducks posted a 41-31 half-time lead and then fought off an Eli rally for an 84-71 win. The Ducks never trailed, although there were five ties in the course of the game.

Yale outscored Oregon 8-2 in the opening three minutes of the second half to cut the margin to 43-39. A jump shot by Larry Holliday upped the edge to six points but the Bulldogs countered with two baskets by Robert Jackson and eventually tied the score at 55-55 when John Whiston was fouled by John Green and connected on two free throws.

But a driving layin by Gaskins, a Stan Love jumper and another jump shot by Green started the Ducks on their way as Oregon outscored Yale 21-4 in the next six minutes.

Gaskins led all Duck scorers with 17 points and collected 13 rebounds, second only to 6-3 Holliday who nabbed 16 baskets in an outstanding performance.

Although Yale was certainly no pushover, the Ducks took the victory in stride and confidently awaited their semi-final show -

down with Brigham Young. The Cougars had knocked off pre-tourney favorite California 82-74 in the opening round and were now considered a strong contender for the crown.

Cougars Outrun

BYU had the height and experience over the Webfoots but Oregon utilized its quickness and crucial Cougar fouls to post the win and reach the finals for the third time in 10 years.

Both teams had trouble hitting from the field in the first half, with BYU generally maintaining a slight lead. Glen Campbell's lay-in and a jump shot by Bill Drozdak brought the Ducks to a 30-30 standoff at halftime.

Oregon hit only 26 per cent of its shots in the first half as compared to the Cougars' 34 per cent, but things began to change as the final period got under way.

Both teams had a hot hand from the floor as Oregon hit nine of its first 11 shots from the field, while BYU was eight for 11.

The Cougars grabbed a 66-62 lead with 4:20 left, but then Campbell, a senior center, began working inside against the two BYU big men, Paul Ruffner and Scott Warner. The 6-6 Duck center connected on a left-handed hook to cut the margin to two points.

Campbell Leads Ducks

He then scored on a twisting lay-in and drew Warner's fifth foul while attempting another shot with 2:54 left. Campbell missed his first attempt but made his second try good to cut the Cougars' lead to 68-67.

Doug Howard gave BYU a two-point edge when he connected on a free throw brought on by a technical foul on Love. Brigham Young then brought the ball down court with less than two minutes to play, but Ruffner was called for charging and left the game with five fouls.

Campbell then went to work on BYU's inexperienced sophomore center Viekko Vainio and scored on another underhand lay-in to tie the contest 69-69 and send the game into overtime.

Oregon hit seven of nine free throws, including four by Gaskins in the final minute, to help outscore BYU 13-5 in the extra period. Love added six points on two tip-ins and a pair of free throws before fouling out.

While Oregon was winning, Washington State became the

other title contender by upending Syracuse 86-67 and edging Oregon State 51-50 in overtime.

WSU jumped to a seven-point lead over Oregon midway through the first half but field goals by Abrahamson and Gaskins cut the Cougars' lead to 25-24. Another set shot by Abrahamson put the Ducks ahead, but WSU fought back to maintain a 39-37 edge at half-time.

The Ducks shot .516 from the field in the first half including a perfect five-for-five performance by Abrahamson.

Both squads traded baskets in the opening minutes of the second half with the Ducks forging ahead to a seven-point edge with six minutes left.

Washington State rallied to take a 78-77 lead behind Ted Wierman's 27 points, but Love's free throw and Henry's last-second bucket gave Oregon its first Far West Classic championship.

'Abe' Sets Mark

Gaskins finished the game with 23 points followed by Love with 21.

Abrahamson set a new Classic record by hitting seven of eight shots from the floor, breaking the old mark of 10 for 13 set by Vince Fritz of Oregon State in 1967.

Love and Gaskins were named to the all-tournament team in ceremonies following the final contest, in addition to Gaskins' MVP award.

Gaskins, a 6-0 Washington, D.C., junior, finished second in the Classic scoring race with 59 points in three games including 21 of 24 free throws. He also grabbed 22 rebounds.

Belko Pleased

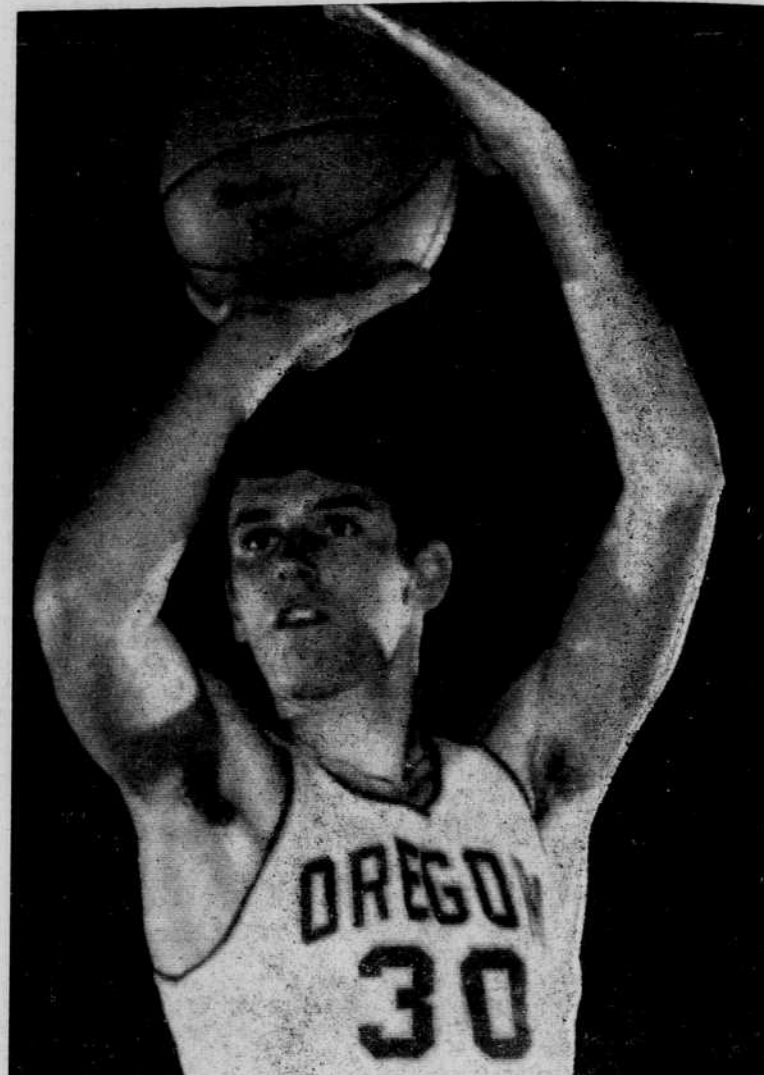
Oregon Coach Steve Belko was very pleased with the Ducks' first Classic title. He guided

Oregon to the finals in 1959 and 1961 but lost to Oregon State both times.

When questioned about the last-second shot by Henry, Belko stated, "We put Love at the post, which would have been

the natural place to throw the ball. This left Henry wide open in the corner. When I saw that shot leave his hands, I thought, if that doesn't go in, something is crooked."

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OREGON FORWARD JIM HENRY
Shot from Corner Won Championship Game

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