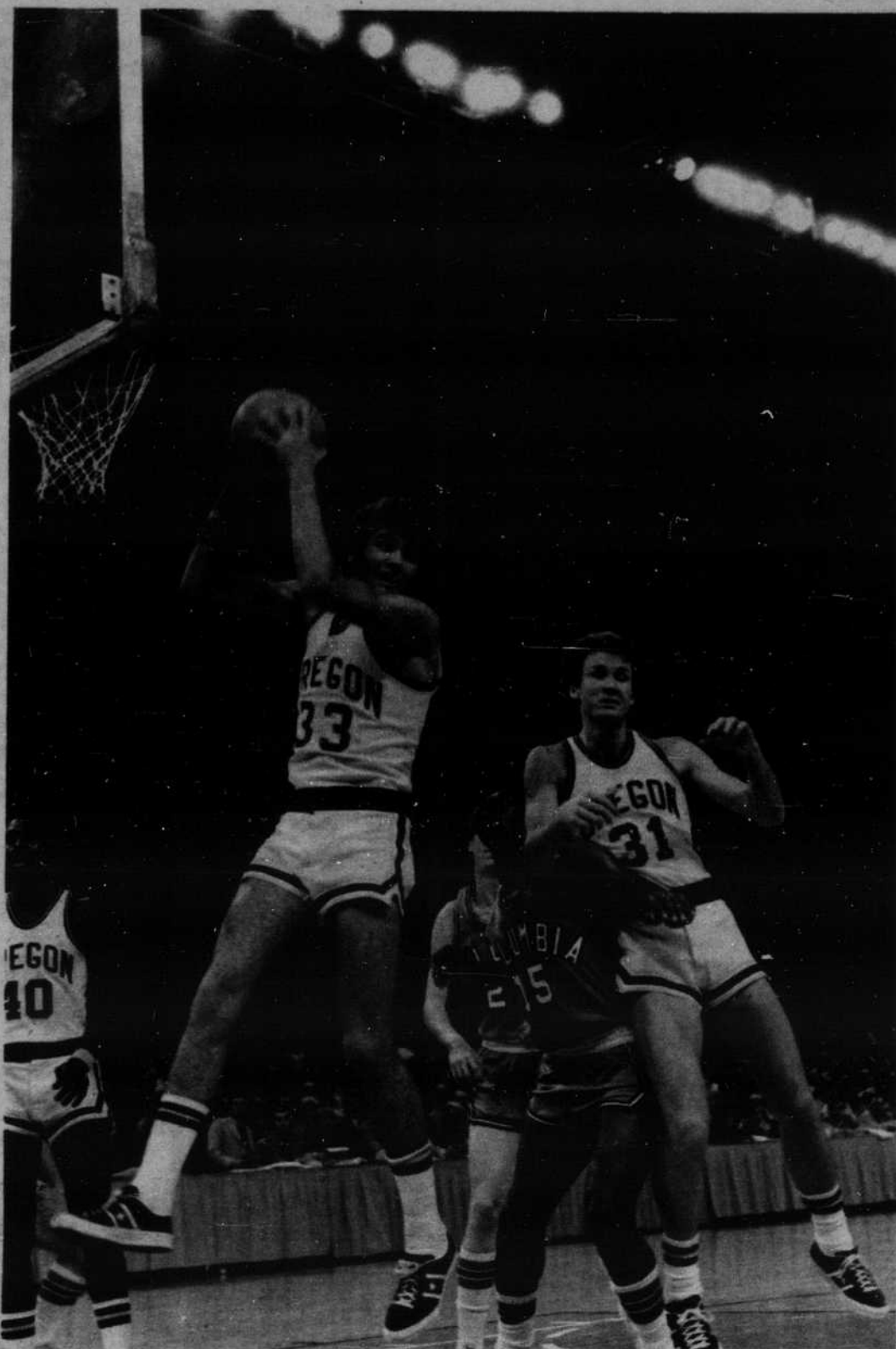


Oregon grows up at The Classic . . .



MINNESOTA'S CLYDE TURNER

Photo by Bruce Landrey



BRUCE COLDREN, KIM SWAIN

Photo by Bruce Landrey

Gophers get a defensive lesson

By PAUL BUKER
Of the Emerald

PORTLAND—The talent gap that last year kept Oregon from winning a single Pacific-8 basketball game may only be partially closed.

There was a time when a band of giants like Minnesota would have made Dick Harter cringe at the price he would pay for engaging the Gophers in a Far West Classic semi-final.

A priest's help would have been more appropriate. Last rites would be in order after Harter's midgets took the floor against a front line of 6-10, 6-9, and 6-8.

Last year, certainly, it would have been gory to see the Ducks go after people like Ron Behagen, Jim Brewer and Clyde Turner. No one would have blamed Harter for heading straight for the Memorial Coliseum lounge at halftime.

But launching an attack against the then fifth-ranked Gophers proved a more sobering exercise. Bill Musselman's bad boys from the Big Ten were favored to win the tournament—and they did, finally staving off Oregon State 82-80 in the final.

En route to finishing in third place via a 60-47 victory over Wyoming, Oregon showed Musselman how Harter likes defense played.

Minnesota, it must be noted, is led by an intense little defensive fanatic who

once coached a team (Ashland, Ohio) that gave up just 33.9 points per game.

"DEFENSE" is emblazoned on the Gophers' practice jerseys and the hyperactive Musselman charges up and down the floor during games screaming for it. Minnesota held Washington State to 35 points in the first round.

Enter Harter and the Ducks—tagged the "Kamikaze Kids," by Oregon Sports Information Director Hal Cowan early in the season.

Oregon was 6-2 and fresh off an 81-56 drubbing of Columbia in the Classic's first round. For the first 10 minutes of the first half, the play of Doug Little, Mark Barwig, Ron Lee, Walt Reynolds, and Gerald Willet had bordered on the spectacular.

Minnesota looked anything but spectacular in beating punchless WSU 41-35 and most of those who watched the Gophers figured they were holding something back.

"We were lousy," admitted Behagen, the superb 6-10 forward who ended up with the Most Valuable Player award.

The Gophers did one thing with awesome success—kept the Cougars off the backboards and clamped on probably what has to be college basketball's most intimidating zone defense.

Oregon's plan of attack the next night was founded on patience and a prayer.

It seemed inevitable that Minnesota would finally wear down the Ducks—the typical matchup was the 6-3 Little against Behagen and freshman Mark Barwig was confronted with Dave Winfield—a 6-6 forward who could jump to the rafters.

Brewer, 6-9 and 225 pounds, looked like he could swallow 212-pound Gerald Willet. And then there was Clyde Turner, 6-8 and with the face of a 35-year-old man.

Turner gritted his teeth the first night while watching Oregon's game with Columbia and promised that he'd hold Ron Lee scoreless.

He didn't, but Musselman's Gophers proved they were more than just boast. They didn't have it won until Lee fouled out with 3:24 left and the final 59-49 margin was a testimony to Harter's game plan.

Oregon burst to a 6-2 lead and led 25-24 at the half and while the Gophers clamped on more and more defensive pressure in the second half, the Ducks didn't crack.

"Our plan was to stay close, get a little lead in the last few minutes, then go zone," said Harter afterwards.

But the Ducks were behind in the closing minutes and had to stick with the man-to-man. The Gophers took the opportunity to break loose for some one-on-one buckets and put it away.

"Oregon is the first team to play us man-to-man," Musselman said. "We

needed that, we looked pretty rusty at the start."

The hardest Gopher to handle turned out to be Behagen who scored 20 points and pulled down 15 rebounds. Minnesota forged an awesome 47-22 board advantage in the end but that wasn't unexpected.

Harter wasn't discouraged. In fact, he looked pleased. The Ducks had opened some eyes.

"It was our best game in two years," he said. "Some of our freshmen are growing old fast. Basically I'd say all of them played up to their level."

Oregon's Classic conquests were impressive—but beating Columbia was no more a trick than defeating the JVs and Wyoming was almost as bad.

The tournament's dog bracket included Texas Christian, Baylor, and Wyoming. Oregon State had the awesome task of escaping from the kennel into the final.

But once there, the Beavers made it exciting—if only because a reserve guard named Cliff Jones came off the bench to hit 10 straight points in the second half.

Before that the Gophers were coasting home. They ended up fighting for their lives. Something the Ducks made them do the night before. Harter wanted a rematch. "I'd like to play them every day; it would speed our development."

He wouldn't say that about UCLA.