

Ducks keep NIT bid alive with one-point win

By BOB WELCH Of the Emerald

CORVALLIS — In a Civil War scrap that was both typical and abnormal, Oregon rallied from a five-point deficit in the last two and a half minutes to whip Oregon State 57-56 in Pacific-8 action Thursday night.

"It was nice," said one of the 10,500 fans leaving limp Gill Coliseum, "that somebody decided to win."

It was especially nice if you're a Quacker Backer and remembered Rickey Lee's unreal 25-footer that beat the Ducks at Gill last year. Or if you were one of Oregon's four seniors, who had never beaten the Beavers in Corvallis. Or if you would like to see the Ducks go to the National Invitational Tournament.

Oregon is now 19-10 overall, 10-4 in Pac-8 play, and most likely headed to New York for the N.I.T.

"I think we proved we deserved to go," said Greg Ballard. "Nineteen and ten isn't that bad, we've got Ronnie Lee and we beat UCLA. I think that's enough."

Oregon coach Dick Harter thinks it is too, but isn't positive the N.I.T. does. "We've had no official word from the N.I.T.," he said, "unless our athletic director knows something I don't."

The thing is, until Lee hit a 10-foot turn-around banker with 14 seconds left, neither Oregon nor Oregon State looked like they wanted to win the darn thing.

But in the end, you could tell Ronnie wanted it. Tied 49-49 with three minutes to go, Oregon State reeled off five straight points to make it 54-49 with 2:22 left.

But Lee, who's done nearly everything in his four-year career except win at Gill, had the last word. After Stu Jackson hit a short jumper, and Ballard potted a pair of free throws, Lee sunk two free throws to put the Ducks up 55-54 and, after OSU's Tim Hennessey hit two at the line, pulled two key plays out of the trick bag to douse the Beavers.

The 6-4 All-American, hounded by the Beaver crowd as a sloppy hot dog, backed sophomore reserve guard Leon Jordan to within 10 feet of the basket, faked to his right and swung around to his left to bank in the winning shot.

The Beavers countered with a full-court inbounds pass that Rocky Smith leaped high to grab, but Lee swiped Smith's game-saving attempt to kill Oregon State's chances.

After being fouled, Lee missed the first of a one-and-one with three seconds to go, Rocky's 40-footer at the buzzer was just short and Oregon had beaten the Beavers for the third time in a row.

If the ending of the game was consistent with Civil Wars of the past, the rest of the game — particularly the first half — was not. Consider that:

- The score was only 6-5 with seven minutes gone in the game and 12-7 with over 13 minutes gone.

- The two clubs had 23 turnovers in the first half.

- Oregon was the hottest team on the court in the first half, shooting .316 per cent to Oregon State's .308 (the Beavers entered the game at a 53 per cent clip).

- Oregon State, at one point, went 8:16 without a field goal in the first half, Oregon 7:41 with nothing from the field.

"We were over-tense, over-eager," said Harter.

"The crowd was more excited than ever before," said Oregon State forward Paul Miller. "I think it pumped up both teams and we were both forcing a lot of bad shots and passes."

At any rate, Oregon managed a 22-21 halftime lead.

Then came Phase II of the game: 20 minutes of shifting momentum. Oregon hit three quick baskets at the start of the second half to go up 28-21 — the game's biggest lead — but the lead didn't last long.

Oregon State finally found the range, scoring 12 unanswered points — 6 for 7 from the field — to take a 33-28 advantage.

And then it was the Duck's turn again, outscoring the Beavers 18-9 to regain the lead, 46-42, with 7:42 left. For a moment, you thought the lead was there to stay, that the ping pong game was over.

Nope. Rickey Lee canned a pair of free throws and Rocky Smith a pair of field goals to knot it up, then Hennessey hit a three-point play underneath and Smith added a follow-up shot to send Oregon State in front, 54-49.

With Beaver fans thundering and the Ducks floundering, Harter called time out. "I just told them to show a little more poise," he said. "I told them we had plenty of time to come back. And, as it turned out, we did."

OREGON (57) — Mack 4, Ballard 22, Geoff Nelson, Barwig, Lee 24, Drummond, Gary Nelson, Jackson 2, Graham, Hartshorne 5, Moreck.

OREGON STATE (56) — Don Smith 6, Daniel 2, Miller 8, Hennessey 11, Rocky Smith 18, Jordan 5, Lee 3, Tucker 3.

Oregon 22 35-57

Oregon State 21 35-56

Total fouls — Oregon 22, Oregon State 22.

Fouled out — Lee, Tucker (OSU)

Att. — 10,489.

NCAA tabs Huskies

SEATTLE (AP) — The University of Washington basketball team has accepted an invitation by the National Collegiate Athletic Association to play in the Division I tournament March 13, school officials said Thursday.

The Huskies, 22-4 with one game remaining against Washington State in Pullman Saturday, will play either in a Midwest subregional game in either Lawrence, Kansas, or Denton, Texas. The exact location was not immediately available.

UCLA, the Pacific-8 conference leader, will also represent the league.

"I'm very happy for the team, the six seniors and especially happy for a very fine coach, Marv Harshman," said Dr. Joe Kearney, Washington's athletic director.

The announcement marks Washington's first appearance in the NCAA tournament since 1953 when the Huskies finished third.

Karen Banks led Oregon with 10 points while Chris Briot and Sally Bickle added eight.

The Ducks face the loser of the Oregon College of Education-Washington State game this morning at 9 a.m.

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Photo by Greg Clark

Danny Mack was in the thick of things under the boards Thursday night.

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