

A rivalry-filled weekend for Mac Court

Oregon vs. Oregon State and this meeting counts

By MIKE GRADY
Of the Emerald

The Oregon Ducks, 2-2 in Pac-8 conference play, will be hoping to come out of Saturday afternoon's game against Oregon State in a tie for third place with the Beavers.

Scheduled as the only Pac-8 action this weekend, the game will be telecast live from Mac Court over the NBC/TV's sports network at 4 p.m. It will be the Ducks' last Pac-8 game until Feb. 2.

"It means everything," said Oregon coach Dick Harter in reference to the importance of this season's second "civil war" action between the two schools. "It means a lot more than just the league standing too."

"If we win this game, we put ourselves in good position," he said. And by good position Harter doesn't mean just the aspect of where Oregon would physically stand in the league, but the psychological aspect of where they would be as well.

It's no secret to Oregon followers that consistency has been an absent element in this year's squad. If Harter's troops are to level out in any games this season, tomorrow's, as well as the following week's game against the University of Cal.-Davis, would be the ones.

One man who'd like to see things work out differently is Beaver head coach Ralph Miller. Since Dec. 4, on a night that Miller watched his team get trounced by the Ducks in a non-league game in Portland 78-51, he hasn't had too much to frown about. The Beavers have won nine of last 12 since that date and currently hold down second place in the Pac-8 with a 3-1 record.

The big surprise is that they've done all this after losing their big offensive punch in 6-10 center Steve Johnson. After Johnson broke a bone in his foot and was relegated to red shirting, many people counted the Beavers out and figured them to aim for the future with their talented freshmen and the eventual return of Johnson. But not so.

"After Steve's injury, the players realized that they were gonna have to do more themselves," Miller offered as a reason for success. "It's just a matter of trying to improve our execution and becoming a smarter basketball team. It takes time for the younger players to learn but they're doing it. They've really adjusted well."

Harter agreed that the Beavers, who invaded the Pit Saturday, will be of a different quality than the team the Ducks faced earlier this year in Portland and echoed Miller's views on what has happened in the meantime.

"They've had some misfortune and when that happens you usually get closer together," said Harter. "I'd say that they've done so far what we did last year."

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Swimming

of the meet lies on our divers taking one and two in both events. That is one area where they (Puget Sound) are not two or three swimmers deep.

"We saw Puget Sound at the Husky invitational and they did a super job. By their current times matched against ours it will be very close," Schleicher added.

Oregon must also gear for Montana, which sports four good swimmers and Portland State, which Schleicher admits is pretty much of a secret. For Montana, Charlie and Jim Billings head the crop, followed by freestyler Tim Morean and Doug Amorce. Youth could play a part over the weekend.

"It really depends on what freshmen they (Portland State and Montana) have," said Schleicher, who has the inside track on only two Portland State swimmers, Jim Mendahl and Kenny Rousch.

Two Ducks who most likely will not make the trip, according to Schleicher, will be Steve Graffeo and Ron Wiggim. Wiggim will not compete due to an allergy and academic commitments.

Graffeo was injured at Tuesday's Southern Oregon meet when he attempted to retrieve a basketball hoop near the pool side and was knocked unconscious by the board.

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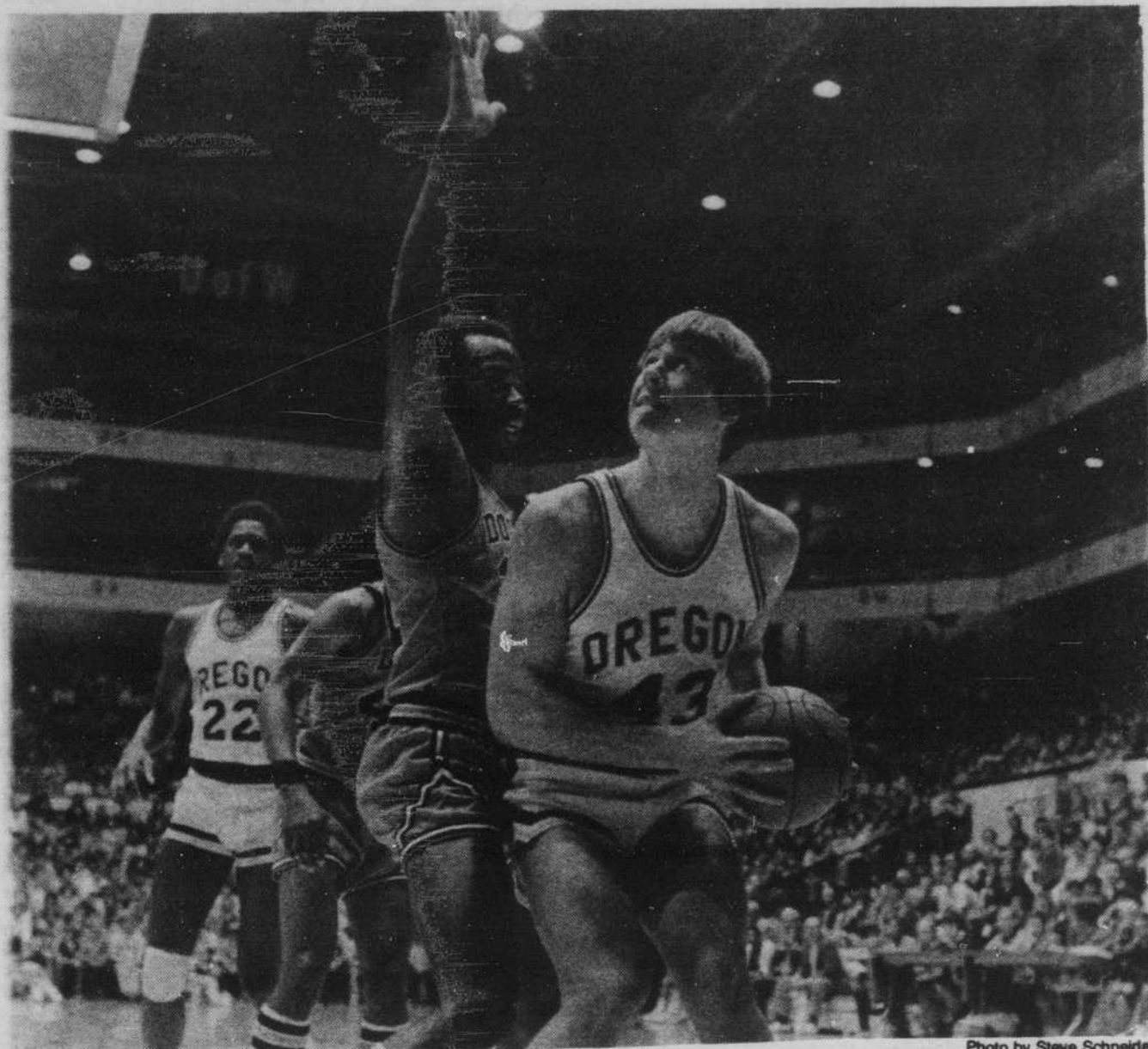


Photo by Steve Schneider

Mike Clark may have to see extra duty this weekend, as the injury to guard Rob Closs might force Dick Harter to borrow one of his forwards to fill the gap. Tip-off for the televised contest with OSU is 4 p.m.

Flying Ducks host potent ASU

In what Coach Bill Ballester terms the "barn-burner of the year," the third-ranked Flying Ducks of Oregon will face their toughest test of the season tonight when the dazzling and inventive Arizona State Sun Devils invade

Mac Court for what should be one of the finest gymnastic meets the nation has to offer.

The ASU match up will be the first in a back-to-back home stand for the Ducks, as Western Athletic Conference powerhouse New Mexico comes to town Saturday night to take on the Ducks.

A perennial national foe of Oregon, Arizona State boasts perhaps the nation's most dynamic team. Led by All-Americans Scott Barkley and Steve Economides, the Sun Devils are in Ballester's words, "the flashiest and most outgoing team in the nation."

"ASU is known as a true 'throw 'throw and go' (trick) team," said Ballester. "They use some wild routines that really are exciting to watch. We've had them up here before and some of their performances are really wild to look at. The crowd really gets a treat seeing them perform."

"This will undoubtedly be one of the biggest meets of the year," he added. "We have been pointing to ASU for quite some time now and we feel confident we will do a good job against them."

"Our practices have all been good and hard and I think the squad is ready to compete in top form. Our main concern at this stage is that we perform to our top abilities once we get out on the floor."

According to Ballester, the key to the Ducks' performance against ASU will be on the side horse, where Oregon has one of the best, Tom Truedson.

"We have probably the world's best in Truedson and it will be tough for ASU to match up with us in this event," said Ballester.

Of course, the Ducks will have the rest of their usual star-studded cast on hand for tonight's meet, led by two-time high school All-American Jim Kelch.

After facing the Sun Devils tonight, the Ducks will have to dig into the reserve tank for some extra fuel, as New Mexico comes to MacCourt Saturday night to challenge the Ducks.

The Lobos face the unenviable task of going against the Ducks with several of their star performers not in the lineup. Perry Genovese, the strongest performer for the Lobos, is out with a shoulder injury, while teammate Chuck Walter, who is the defending NCAA champ on the side horse, is also unable to compete. And as if the medical report isn't bad enough for the Lobos, all-around champ Steve Ortis has quit the squad.

However, the Lobos are not without some firepower, as three of their top four all-around competitors have posted scores of 50 points or better. Balance appears to be the strongest asset for the Lobos.

In addition to Kelch, who holds the Oregon all-around record of over 108 total points, the Ducks will counter with Gene Christensen, who has also gone over the 50 mark with an optional total of 51.70, and Jim Hamilton, who has a season best A-A total of 50.15.

Meet time for tonight's important matchup with ASU will be at 7:30 p.m., while the New Mexico meet has been moved back to 8:30 p.m.

The Ducks will be attempting to extend their string of 25 straight home victories with a win over ASU tonight. Undoubtedly ASU will have something to say about that.

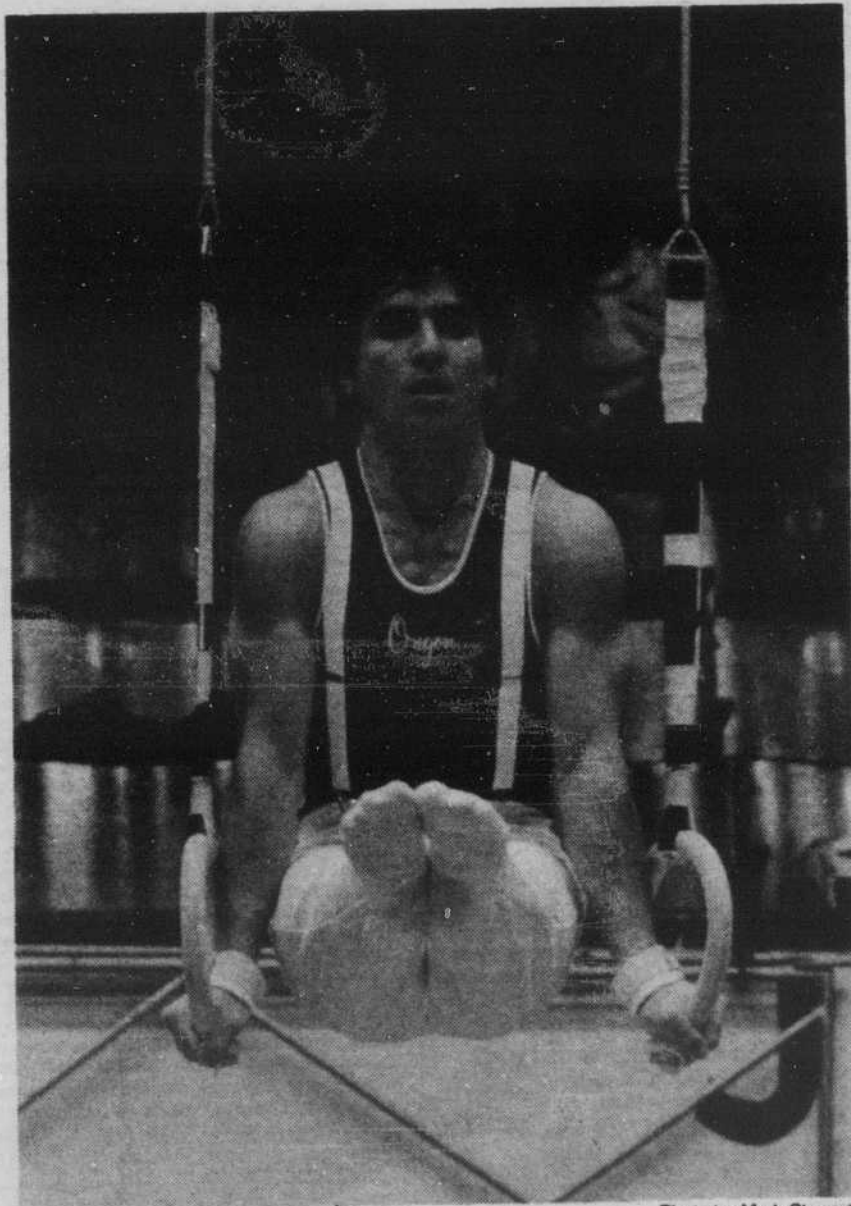


Photo by Mark Stewart

Gene Christensen will be one of Oregon's keys as an all-around performer in the most important dual meet weekend of the year, as the Ducks host Arizona State and New Mexico.