

basketball

Freshman Davis improving in Duck program

By MIKE GRADY
Of the Emerald

When Oregon won their two conference games against California and Stanford two and a half weeks ago, one person who shouldn't have been too surprised was 6-10 reserve center Rich Davis.

After all, one reason why Davis picked Oregon as the college he was to attend was because he felt the program here had more to offer than those at Berkeley and Palo Alto.

"Cal and Stanford were the two other Pac-8 schools who recruited me," the lanky freshman from Alta Loma, Cal. said recently. "They were nice places and everything but Oregon had the best all-around program. I really didn't think that they were up to our level."

"Oregon recruits guys that will fit in with the others in the program," continued Davis, explaining why he picked Eugene as his home for the next four years. "They just don't go out and try to get the best available."

But in Davis' case that statement may very well be false. Sure, he hasn't gotten as much playing time as the other four freshmen have so far this season. And sure, it's obvious that he's not at the point right now where you can expect him to put a move on some-

one with his back to the basket, wheel by him with one dribble and two steps and stuff it through. But he does have what it takes to improve up to that level in the Oregon system — desire.

"I feel like I've really developed up here so far and as far as where I'm going, I've still got a long way," Davis said when questioned about his improvement thus far in the Oregon program.

"It's kind of strange because my parents saw the UCLA game last weekend and that was the first time they've seen me play this year. All they could say afterwards was 'Wow, he's changed an awful lot.'"

Mom and Dad weren't the only ones who noticed the inspired play of Davis on an otherwise dismal weekend for the Ducks though. Head coach Dick Harter was also complimentary of Davis' play, guaranteeing afterwards that the 18-year-old reserve would be seeing more and more playing time in the future.

And for someone who is used to entering the game at only a second's notice, cold and tight, that's a welcome sign.

"I really haven't worried too much about playing time though," said Davis. "I mean in Danny Hartshorne we've got a guy who can really play. I'm just trying to soak up and learn as much as I can."

"And when I get a chance, I just play as hard as possible. That's what we're trying to do right now — find guys who want to play hard."

When talking to Davis it becomes apparent that hard work will be one of the last things to scare him off. As a matter of fact he seemed happy when reminded of the vast difference between college ball and high school ball, where he averaged 14 points and 11 rebounds per game last year as a senior.

"The adjustment of going against big guys all the time hasn't been that bad for me," said Davis. "It has helped because now I've had to work harder. In high school I was sometimes half a foot taller than the other guy. Most of the guys were scared just because of that fact."

Alta Loma, where Davis prepped, is about 50 miles outside of Los Angeles, which was one of the reasons why he chose the Eugene environment.

"I wanted to go to school in a place that was a little smaller than what I was used to," he said. "And it was so green up here. Down there you're afraid to breathe too deeply because of how bad the air can get."

Two other aspects of the Eugene community that stood out in Davis' mind after his visit a year ago were a trip up the McKenzie River and the Oregon-UCLA game. What better way is there to convince a prospect that Mac Court should be his forwarding address than to show him "deranged idiots" cheering their team on to victory against the most prestigious program in college basketball history?

"I was kinda scared after watching that game," admitted Davis. "I was scared that I wouldn't be able to play up to that level. But the coaches came down and reassured both me and my parents. Now I think I've adjusted better than what I thought I would have."

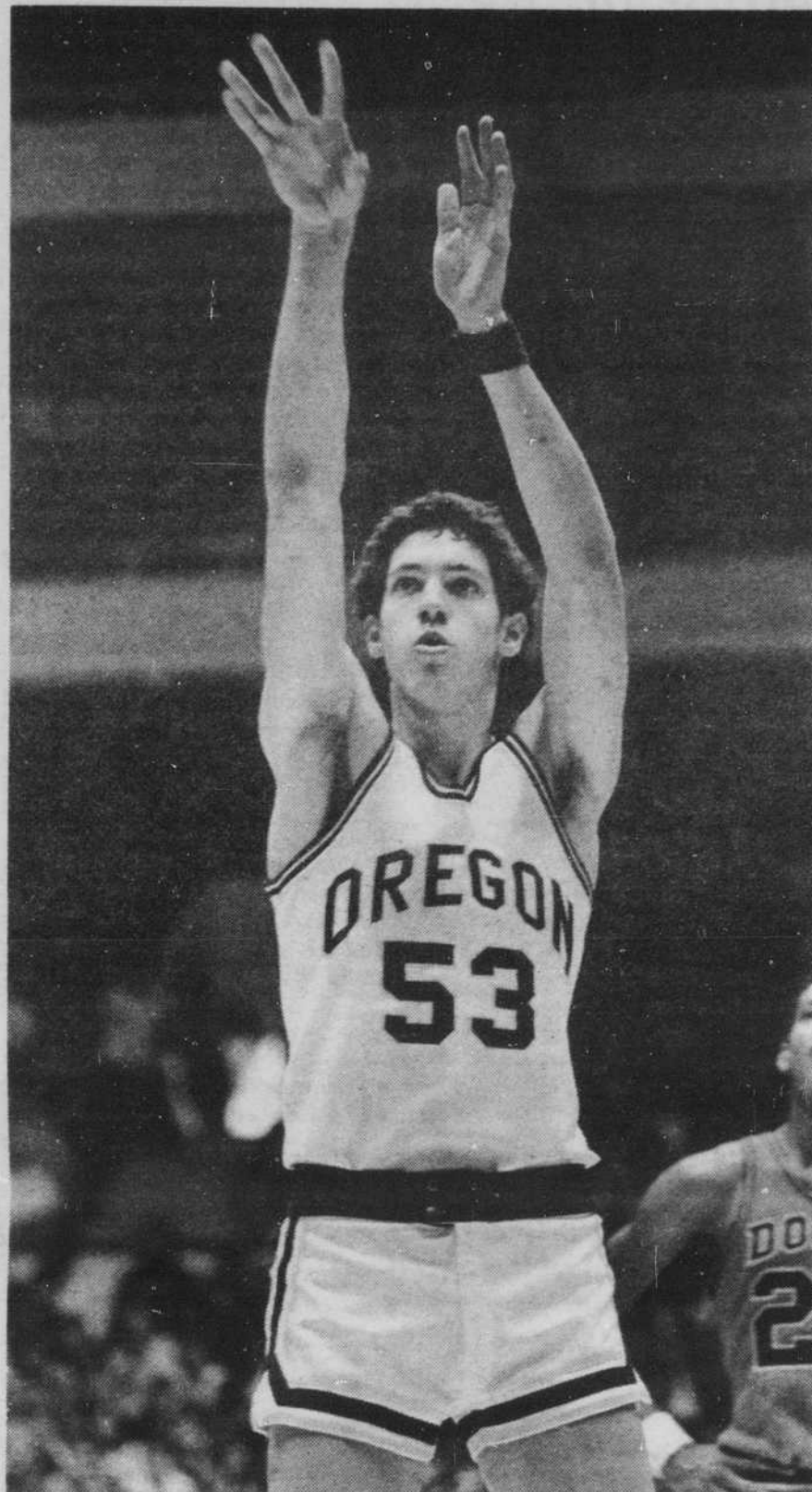


Photo by Steve Schneider

Rich Davis, Oregon's 6-10 freshman center, has started out slowly this year, but has been seeing increased playing time. He was one of the few Ducks that coach Dick Harter thought played well in losses to UCLA and USC two weeks ago.

Ducks to face Cal-Davis without services of Closs

The medical diagnosis on basketball guard Robbie Closs is unchanged, according to trainer Larry Standifer. However, Closs is now off the crutches he had to use following his leg injury in the USC game 11 days ago.

There's not much change," said Standifer. "We let him do a little easy running and shooting yesterday. It didn't seem to set him back any."

Standifer is still unsure as to the

exact condition of Closs' leg. The original diagnosis showed a strong possibility of a stress fracture of the lower fibula of the right leg. Though some of the symptoms have abated, Standifer is still treating the injury as a break.

"We still won't get another x-ray for a couple of days," stated Standifer.

Closs has definitely been ruled out of Oregon's Saturday evening game against Cal Davis.

Heart Throbs
are
Coming

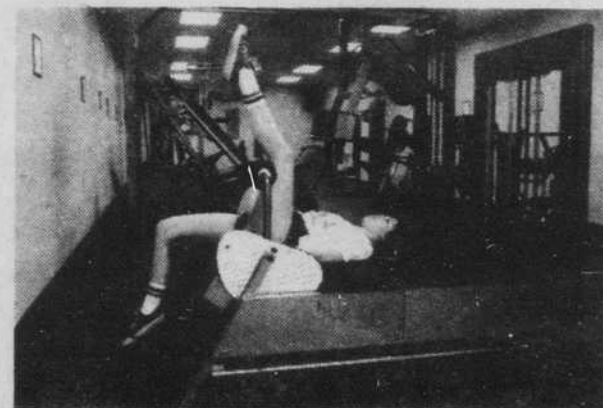
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