

Coach on the floor

Fred Cofield points the way for the Oregon men

By CAROL MORTON
Of the Emerald

It is a clear, cold November night outside, and the floor level benches inside McArthur Court aren't close to being full.

It is Oregon's men's basketball team's first time out of the gate this year — the first of two intrasquad scrimmages. Tonight there won't be a packed, sweaty crowd shaking the rafters of the gym. A front row of green-and-gold-attired men give traditional rowdiness the old Mac Court try, booing at the referee introductions and cheering the green and yellow squads. But even they will fade out later in the game.

In a green warm-up suit, Fred Cofield intercepts a rolling basketball, lifting it off the floor gently — almost lovingly. He pauses a minute to watch the other players casually shoot before the start of the scrimmage. As words from a song that had been throbbing through the lockerroom stereo still echo in his mind, he quickly dribbles through the key for a lay-up shot.

While his team — Yellow — is being introduced, Cofield claps steadily, breaking his rhythm only to slap a high-five and chant "boom-boom" to each player trotting out to center court. Court leader and cheerleader, the 6-foot-3-inch point guard cherishes his role as a coach on the floor.

Last year as a freshman, Cofield answered a cry for leadership, a call for a player who would dominate the ball. If he was slightly nervous and unsure of his role then, now he is a veteran player and knows what to expect in Pac-10 games. "My role is more defined this year," he says. "I'm the leader on the court."

"I'm always trying to lift guys up, to excite them. If someone thinks they've had a bad play, I'll say 'You're doing alright.'" explains Cofield. "I tell them what we need. 'Well, let's not get a long shot, let's go inside.' I'm trying to take an active role, not just give the coach's instructions."

This year head coach Jim Haney is working with only the players he recruited. With the exodus of Felton Sealy and Mike Clark, the last bastions of the Dick Harter era have departed, and the Ducks will take on a whole new look.

Haney has the team running a completely new offense. Cofield says they didn't run anything last year that they're running now. "This year we have new plays, new everything. We're even getting new uniforms," he says.

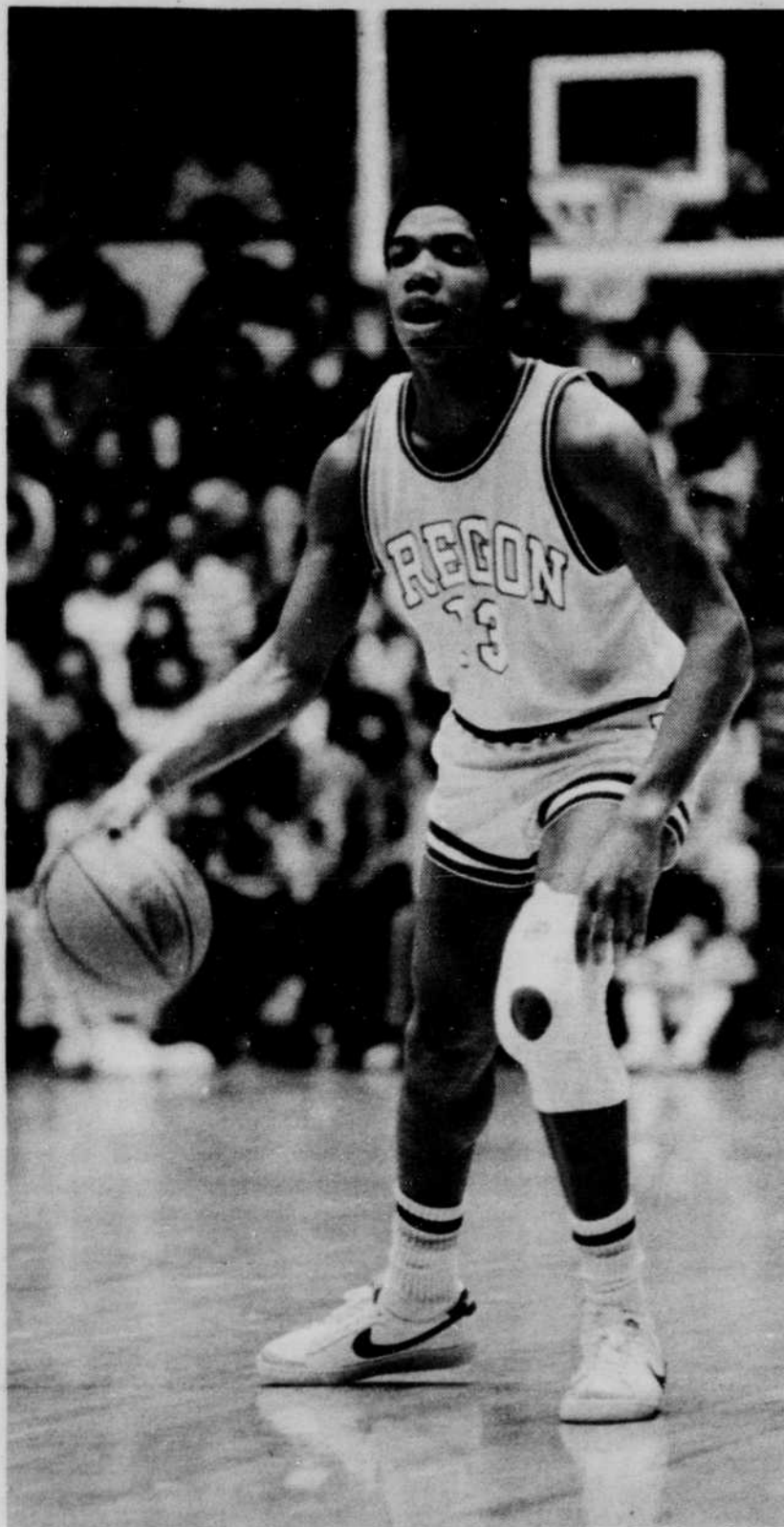
Oregon has switched from the two guard front to a one guard front, giving the point guard more control offensively.

"Everyone is set up and I'm on top. Now our plays are dictated by which side I go to or who I give the ball to — whatever side our coach thinks we need a bucket," Cofield says.

"Our offense is undefendable if we pass quickly," Haney said at a recent practice. "The only time the ball should be on the floor is for a bounce pass or a drive."

Cofield will be sharing his position with senior Barry Walker. The two seem to complement each other in the skills each possesses. Cofield praises Walker's "superior driving and defensive skills," saying his own strength is offense.

Although coaches may say Cofield's greatest gift is leadership, Cofield says it is his court aware-



Fred Cofield

Photos by Steve Dykes

ness. "My court sense is good — knowing my court, my players, knowing what's going on, being aware of what needs to happen."

The leadership role is one Cofield says he has never had to work for. "It comes naturally."

Some would say Cofield's confidence borders on cockiness. Former Oregon runner Paul Geis once said the difference between the two is that confidence is saying what you know you can do, and that cockiness is bragging without being sure you can do what you say.

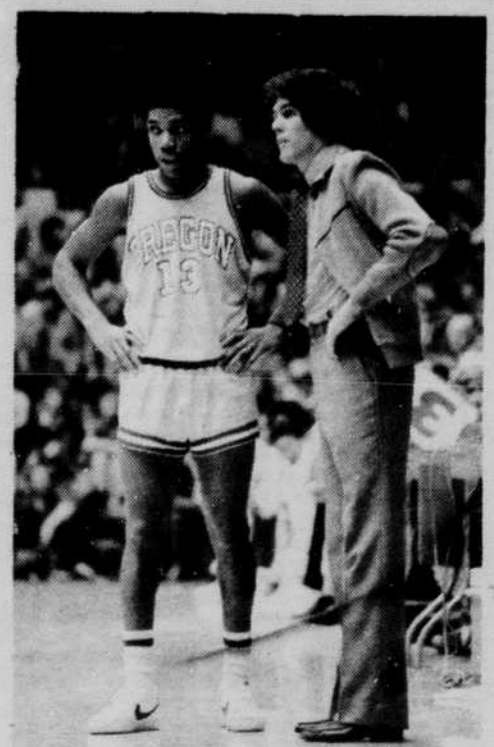
Cofield explains it this way. "When I'm on the court, I think, five people — we can beat the world. If I think any less, it's going to stop me somewhere."

"I'm not going to think I can't beat them because I might not give all I can give. So I'm going to think as positive as I can. So every game I think we're going to win." Later he adds, "It's like army games. We play to kill."

Before he signed to play for Oregon, Cofield watched Oregon play UCLA in Mac Court. He was looking for a team with community support, and that one game was all it took to convince him that Eugene loves its Ducks.

"You pick up a paper, it's Ducks," says Cofield. "What about the Ducks? 'The Ducks Go To McKenzie Park.' That's news? It shows how much the community cares. Since I've been out here, I take an interest in that thing. I'm an avid football fan. Let's go Ducks."

The basketball crowd at Mac Court has often



"My greatest gift is my court sense," says sophomore point guard Fred Cofield. Thrust into the leadership role as a freshman, Cofield led the Oregon squad in assists last season.

been called the sixth player for the Ducks. Cofield says it can carry a team when it's a tight game by getting the other team down, but more importantly, by getting the Ducks psyched up. "Everyone gets involved," Cofield says of the enthusiastic fans. "They're Ducks. We might as well give them a uniform."

Cofield remembers one night last year that felt great for him. UCLA was visiting Mac Court, and led by two points. "One of our players hit a bucket and tied it up. It got very loud in McArthur Court. I was running back on defense and hollering out instructions. I hollered, but I couldn't hear myself because of the crowd. I got really high. The crowd was in a frenzy."

Even without a crowd cheering him on, Cofield is drawn to the court, putting in the extra hours. "I have a love affair with basketball. I get something extra from it when I play. Some people call it a high."

During the season, Cofield eats, sleeps, and lives basketball. In the off-season, he still devotes a lot of time to it. "I'm dedicated," he says.

Music has a time and a place, and with Cofield the right music is as important to his mental preparation for a game as practice and pregame warmup is to it. There's a stereo in the lockerroom where players play their tunes before the game. "On the court when we're warming up, maybe we'll still be talking about the song, getting higher and higher. The adrenaline starts to flow. Music plays a big part before the game."

A couple of hours before the game, easy jazz slows his heart rate down. Then, he speeds up to an "iron beat or maybe a little punk."

Currently, his favorite song is the title cut of the new Angelo Bofill album, "Something About You." Cofield says, "I get psyched up. I start visualizing the game, what I have to do, what it will take to win. If I want to play tough defense, I'll visualize picking the guy up, and making him work hard. I don't play the whole game in my mind, just most of it."

Cofield gets "something extra" from basketball, and the Ducks get something extra from Cofield.

"There's something about you," Bofill could be singing about Cofield. As he pauses before his next warmup shot before the game, the words from his favorite song repeat in his head, "...cause I've committed myself: I've overcome my doubts and fears: You've got to... if you're to make it strong."

Spikers down Montana in five games

The Oregon volleyball team came from behind to tip the University of Montana in a tense fifth game to win the match last night in MacArthur Court.

The Ducks fought back from a 3-10 deficit in the final game, stringing together seven straight points to tie it up, and then went on to score five straight more to win 15-11.

"It was a great comeback," said Oregon coach Chris Voelz. "It was a great team Oregon Daily Emerald

comeback, everyone contributed. It was the kind of victory you like to see."

Oregon came out strong in the first game, taking a 15-4 win. They dropped the second 11-15, but then took another 15-4 win in the third.

"We really fought back. We never gave up in that last game at all," said Voelz. "I was afraid we were going to have a flashback to some of our other losses this season. It did look like we might lose it for a while, but we never quit."

Send in a play to help the Ducks

The Oregon football team needs your help... NOW.

The offense has scored just three touchdowns in its last six games. With two games remaining, it doesn't look like they'll be scoring much more at this rate.

That's the reason the Emerald Sports staff is sponsoring a "Send in a play" contest to help out. Diagram out a play, using the X's and O's, and bring it to the O.D.E. office (third floor of the EMU).

Time is running short, as the contest closes at 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 13, so send in a play and help the Ducks light up the scoreboard.