

Cagers elude Rams

Oregon men bounce back to win by one

By JEFF DICKERSON
Of the Emerald

When freshman Rodnie Taylor stepped up to the free-throw line after taking a long backward stretch to calm his nerves, McArthur Court was as quiet as it had been all night.

The forward for the Ducks stepped up to the line, bounced the ball four times, slowly brought the ball up to eye level and then shot the ball.

Swish.

The crowd of 5,079 erupted as the Ducks took a one-point lead with 4 seconds to play in a game that saw them trail the Rhode Island Rams for most of both halves.

Taylor missed the second shot, but the rebound and subsequent desperation shot by the Rams' Horace Owens failed to produce a basket as time ran out, and the Ducks had their first respectable win in the young campaign, 95-94.

"A one-point win over a good basketball team is the kind you want to have," Oregon coach Jim Haney said after the game.

It's always nice to win, but a victory like this is much better than beating a team everyone expects the team to beat, Haney explained.

"This is the type of game that gives the kids a lot of confidence," he said. Although teams can learn from their losses, said Haney, they get confidence by winning.

There were times, however, when it looked as if the Ducks would not pull this one out.

Both teams came out fast, Oregon playing the quick-transition game Haney is using this year and the Rams running

right with them. The teams were tied 30-30 after sophomore guard Fred Cofield hit a 20-foot jumper from the right side with 6:07 remaining in the first half, but things began to fall apart from there.

Ram forward Wendell Walters took an assist from Roland Houston for a lay-in and was fouled by Duck forward Jerome Williams for the three-point play. From there, Rhode Island reeled off nine straight points before the Ducks could get another score.

The Rams built a 45-34 lead with 2:50 remaining in the half, but Oregon rallied with a 9-2 spurt that left the Ducks trailing 47-43 at the half.

"In the first half, we committed a lot of foolish fouls," Haney said, adding that Oregon sent the Rams to the foul line too many times, allowing them to put points on the scoreboard with a minimal effort.

"We had to work hard to get our scores, and they just walked down to the free-throw line for theirs," the coach said.

After Oregon came out in the second half and allowed the Rams to build a 69-61 lead with

13:12 remaining, the Ducks began a scrappy battle to get back into the game.

They closed the gap to 69-66, but Rhode Island quickly built the lead back up to 75-66 with a Walters tip-in, a lay-up by Marc Upshaw and a pair of free throws by Kevin Compton.

The Rams extended their lead to 80-70 with 10:12 remaining in the game, before Oregon began its move, by outscoring Rhode Island 25-14 the rest of the way.

The teams traded baskets for three minutes, and then the Ducks' David Brantley and Blair Rasmussen narrowed the lead to 88-82 with 5:29 remaining. One minute later, Taylor stole the ball from Compton and drove for a stuff shot to bring the Ducks to within four.

Kevin Whiting missed a free throw for the Rams on the other end of the court, and the Ducks reeled off four unanswered points to tie the game at 90 with 3:17 to go.

Rhode Island was able to score four unanswered points before the Ducks answered with the final five tallies of the evening, the last one by Taylor to win

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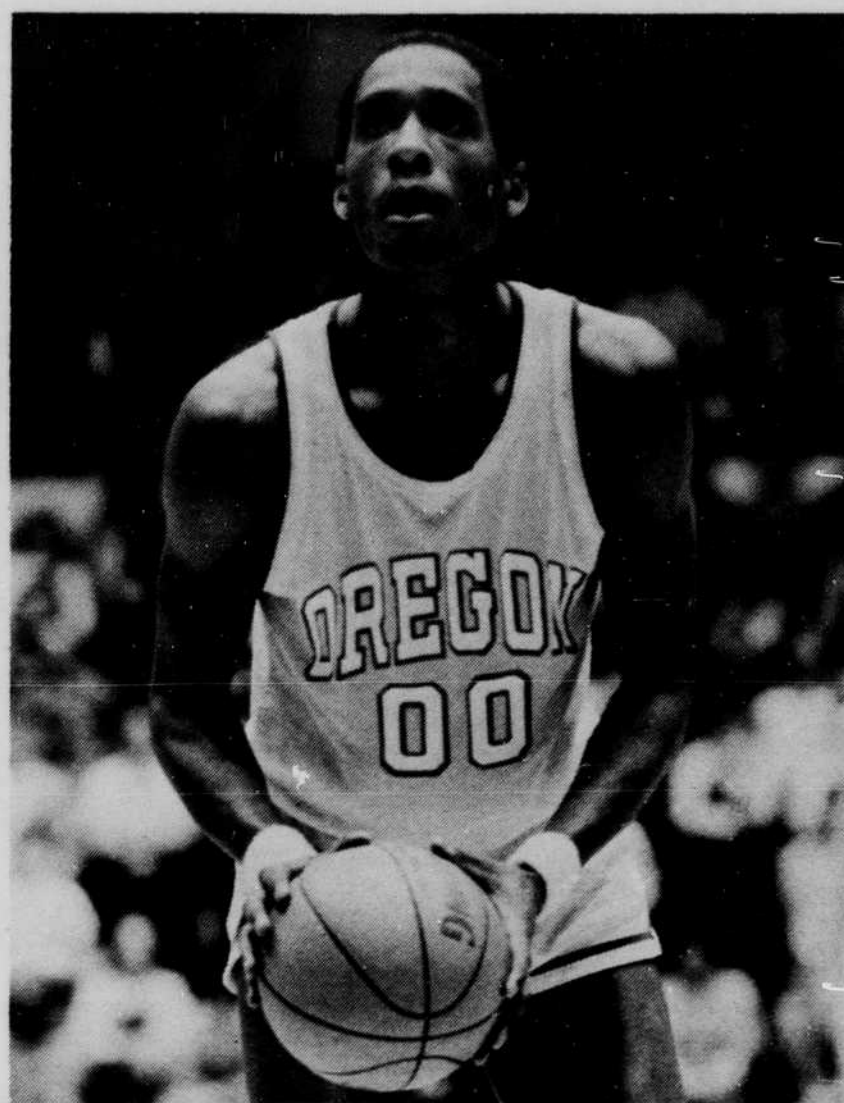


Photo by David Corey

Rodnie Taylor held the game in his hands.



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