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Oregon in first; for now

By DONALD COULTER
Of the Emerald

The Oregon Ducks are in a position that no Jim Haney-coached team has known before — they own a share of first place in the Pac-10 basketball standings.

Okay, so maybe the season is only two games old. But this is a team that lost five of its first six conference games last year, and six of its first seven the year before that. Even their most vocal cynics are suddenly silent (for a while, anyway).

The weekend sweep over Arizona (97-88) and Arizona State (82-65) at Mac Court marks the first time Oregon has defeated both Arizona teams in a weekend series. And it comes on the heels of a second-place finish for the Ducks at the Far West Classic in Portland.

The wins raise Oregon's overall record to 7-4, with four of those victories coming in an eight-day stretch last week. But more significant than the cluster of recent Duck wins is how they've gotten them.

The Ducks came back to win three of those four. At the Far West opener, David Brantley scored five key points late in the Wisconsin game as Oregon came back after trailing most of the way to win, 85-82. The next evening against Portland, the Ducks trailed by 14 points early in the second half before taking control of the boards to pull out an exciting 69-68 win.

Although Oregon lost the championship game to unbeaten Idaho, 81-62, the two victories gave the Ducks a measure of poise and confidence that carried over to the conference opener.

Saturday night against Arizona Oregon spotted the Wildcats a 16-point lead early.

But behind the play of reserve guards Gary Gatewood (7 points) and Barry Walker (5 assists) the Ducks took control of the game's tempo. Oregon outscored Arizona 26-8 over the next seven minutes and took a 50-48 halftime lead on a 20-foot jumper by freshman Bryan Trendell.

The Ducks increased their

lead in the second half behind 11 points by Walker, nine rebounds by Jerome Williams, and the team's 17 of 20 foul shooting. Seven Ducks finished in double figures, with senior forward John Greig the leading scorer with 15 points.

Oregon didn't need comeback magic against ASU the next evening as the Ducks never trailed by more than three. With 18 first-half points by Greig — he hit 9 of 10 field goal attempts — the Ducks led 44-37 at halftime.

Once again, it was The Barry Walker Show in the second half, as the senior guard ignited Oregon's fast break. Behind Walker's passing and driving, Oregon had a surprisingly easy job of handling the favored Sun Devils in the second half, revenging a 104-64 loss to ASU in Tempe last year.

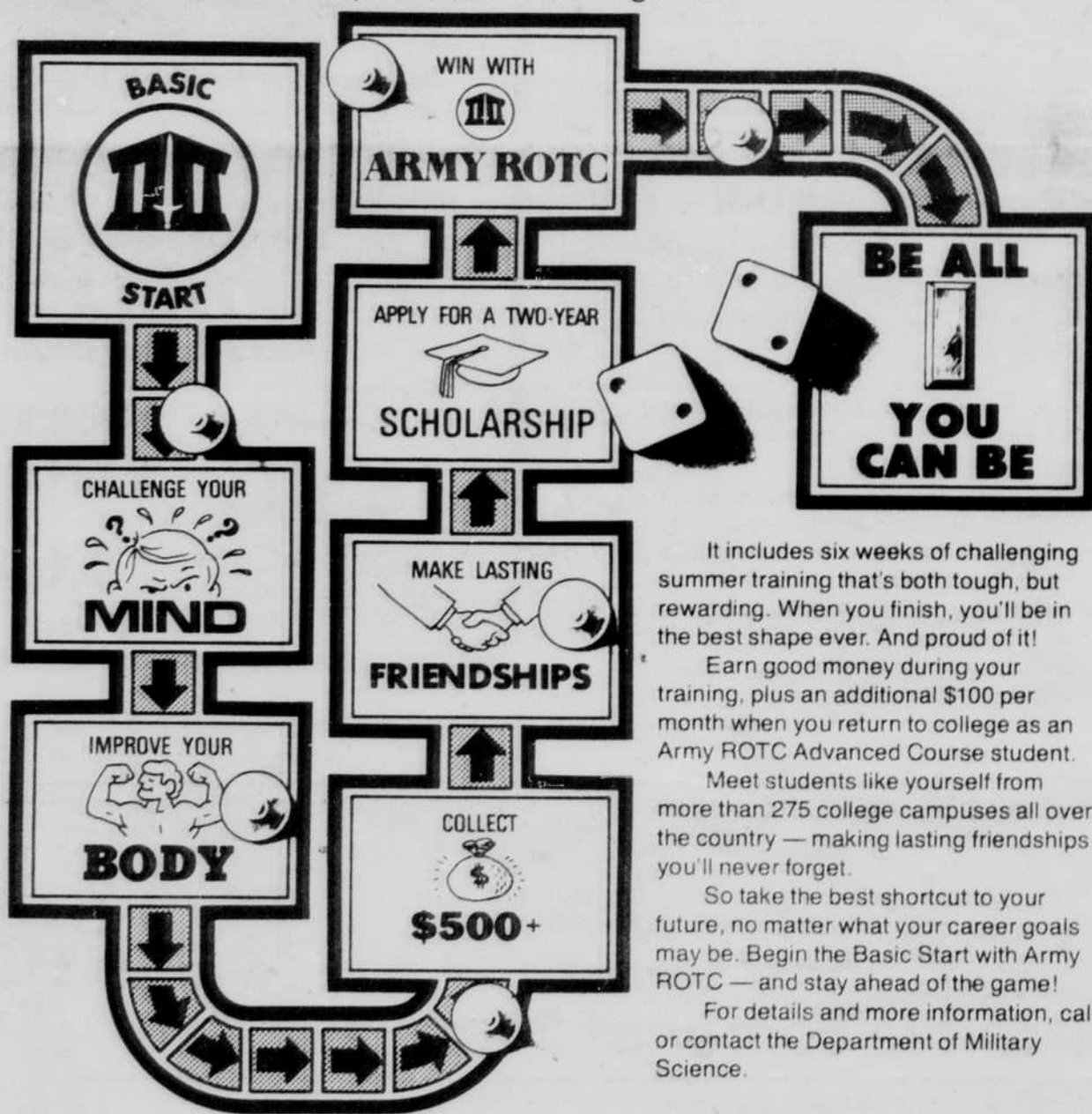
Despite 25 points from Greig — most points scored by a Duck this season — the star of the show was Walker. Of Walker's 24 points against the Arizona teams, 20 came in the second halves, at a time when the Ducks were turning close games into blowouts.

Without a doubt, the victory was a cohesive team effort, one that stands in sharp contrast to the bumbling, error-filled moments that marred Oregon's first six outings.

"We are definitely more confident," Haney said, "but my concern now is not to get cocky. You can't forget how hard you had to compete to win."

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Women

Continued from page 7

Smith and Lang were both named to the all-tournament team while Smith was selected as the tourney's most valuable player.

Against Drake in McArthur Court, Oregon had its problems. The Ducks led only by four at the half.

But they regrouped at the intermission and went on to win the game. Lang led Oregon with 19 points while Smith grabbed 13 rebounds.

Oregon started slowly against Pacific Christian and finally got untracked in the second half outscoring the Crusaders 56-26. The Ducks shot well from the field hitting on 44-of-83 shots for .530.

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