

Their defense never rests

Pac-10 leading Beavers put the pressure on

By Donald Coulter
Of the Emerald

Opportunistic. Intimidating. Relentless.

No matter what adjective you use to describe Oregon State's defense, one thing is clear — the Beavers are winning big

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because of it, and they're making a lot of teams look bad in the process.

"Their offense is predicated on defense," says Oregon forward John Greig about the Beavers, who play the Ducks at Mac Court Saturday night (8:05 p.m.).

"Give them a two or four point lead," Greig explains, "and they put pressure on you. Then they'll make a steal, force a couple of turnovers, and all of a sudden they're up by ten points."

"That's what happened to Stanford (81-38 losers to OSU Monday night). Oregon State

forced them to panic. Stanford was so concerned about getting the ball past half-court that they couldn't get their thoughts together."

Stanford coach Dick DiBiasi would probably agree with Greig.

"I never remember being taken so decisively out of what we wanted to do," DiBiasi said after the OSU game.

And so the frustration goes for most opponents of the 11-2 Beavers, rated 15th this week by the Associated Press and 14th by United Press International. Despite the graduation of Steve Johnson, Ray Blume and Mark Radford from last year's Pac-10 champs, Oregon State has won its first four conference games by an average of almost 30 points.

"I certainly felt they would be good," says Oregon head coach Jim Haney of OSU, "but I thought they would have a few more losses by now."

Haney says the loss of the three stars from last year's 26-2 team, which was rated No. 1 in the nation for most of the season, has bound this year's squad together.

"Lots of people assumed Oregon State wouldn't be of the caliber it was last year," Haney says, "and it was like a slap in the face for the players that remained. The success of a year ago has just given them more confidence."

A key factor in OSU's defense, which is allowing opponents only 55.3 points per game, is 6-4 senior guard Lester Connor. Connor leads the Pac-10 in steals (3.3), is second in assists (5.2), and leads the Beavers in scoring (15.7).

But according to Connor's

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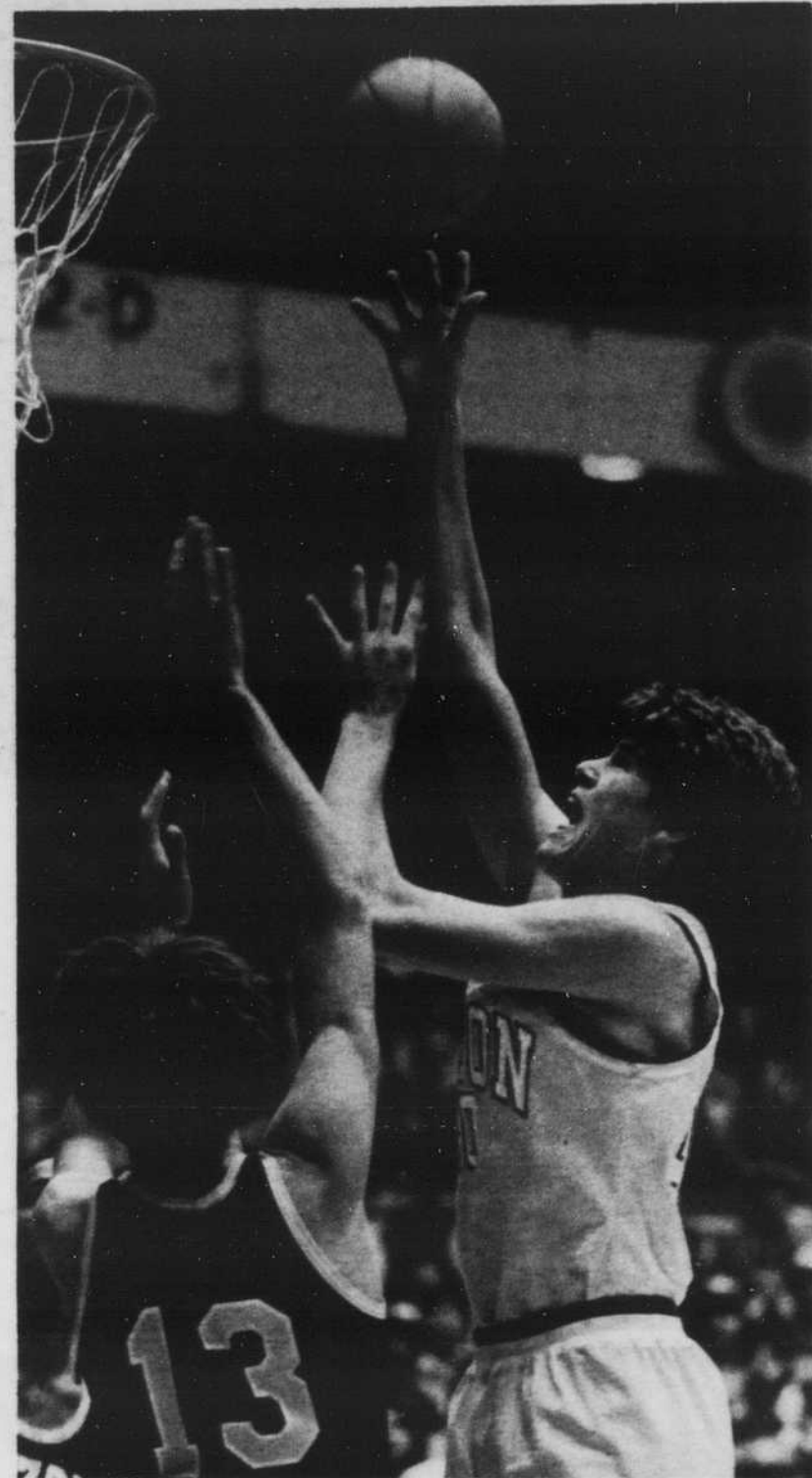


Photo by Bob Baker

Fresh pivotman Blair Rasmussen will try to counter Oregon State's Charlie Sitton in the middle.

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