

It's Civil War time

Ducks to face balanced Beavers in Corvallis

By Donald Coulter
Of the Emerald

Now that they're back in the nation's top-10 once again, and in the running for a third straight Pacific 10 Conference basketball title, comparisons between this year's version of the Oregon State Beavers and last year's 26-2 squad are abounding.

And they stack up very favorably for the 1981-82 team, which hosts Oregon in Corvallis Saturday.

Oregon State enters Saturday's game with a 17-3 record, a share of the Pac-10 lead, a No. 6 ranking in both wire service polls, and a lot of believers among the teams they've encountered this season.

One of those who has testified on behalf of the current Beaver squad is Stanford coach Dick DiBiasi. DiBiasi speaks as somewhat of an expert to OSU's recent Pac-10 supremacy, as his teams have lost six in a row to the Beavers, including a pair of 43 and 30-point thrashings this year.

"(After the first game) I didn't think they were better than last year," DiBiasi said after last Saturday's 111-81 loss to OSU. "But now I do. If you look at their stats, you'll see it."

Indeed. The Beavers' forte in recent years has been defense, and statistically they are playing it better than the team which was No. 1 in the nation for most of last year.

Last season Oregon gave up an average 60.9 points per game, fewest of any Pac-10 team. So far this year, the Beavers are allowing 56.6 points per game, and only 53.7 points in conference play.

"They're a little better defensively," agrees Oregon head coach Jim Haney, "but with Steve Johnson's departure, they're not as good offensively."

Maybe not, but they don't miss Johnson's 21 points a game as desperately as many thought they would. Oregon State is averaging 72.7 points this year, only three points fewer than it did last year. In conference games, that figure is 75.1, second only to Oregon by one-tenth of a point.

Last year, the Beavers set a school record by leading the NCAA in field goal percentage with a .564 mark. This year, they're shooting at a .538 clip, and have hit better than 57 percent

of their shots in conference play. That's five percentage points better than any other Pac-10 team.

Want some more evidence? Oregon State is ahead of school records in three other categories: steals (9.2), scoring margin (17.8) and forcing opponents into turnovers (20.9). And it is averaging 17.5 assists per game, for an assist ratio of .618, far and away the best in the conference.

All of this for a team that was supposedly entering a rebuilding year after losing Johnson, Ray Blume and Mark Radford.

Much of the slack in Johnson's absence has been taken up by sophomore Charlie Sitton. Sitton, who started the season at forward, moved to the post after Greg Wiltjer injured his ankle vs. Idaho in late December. At center, Sitton is averaging 14 points and shooting 62 percent from the field.

Still, it is OSU's balance — William Brew and Lester Connor at guard, Danny Evans and A.C. Green at forward, and set-shooter Rob Holbrook coming off the bench that has propelled the Beavers to a 10-1 conference record.

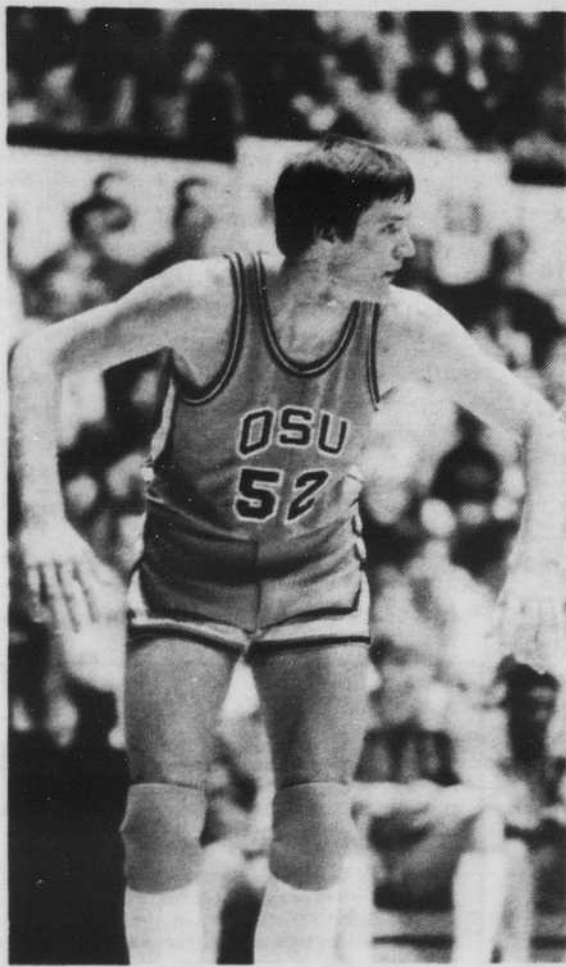
"They just don't make mistakes," adds Haney. "I don't think they're a great team, but then again, no team in the Pac-10 is great this year."

OSU's first game against the Ducks was in typical fashion. The Beavers had six players in double figures, stole the ball 12 times and forced 24 Duck turnovers. Connor led the way with 15 points, eight assists and five steals.

Despite the 15-point victory over Oregon in January, OSU head coach Ralph Miller isn't taking the Ducks lightly.

"Apparently I took life too easy this week and it survived us for one game," Miller said after the Beavers narrowly beat Cal 57-50 Monday night. "There will not be any letting up in our practices this week to get ready for the Ducks."

DUCK NOTES — Saturday afternoon's game will be televised as the NBC Pac-10 Game of the Week (KVAL, Ch. 13). Starting time is 3:30 p.m. Miller has a lifetime record of 20-16 vs. Oregon, with 15 of those losses coming to former Oregon coach Dick Harter. Haney is 1-8 vs. OSU. Oregon State has won the last six contests between the two teams, the most recent a 76-61 victory in Eugene three weeks ago.



Charlie Sitton

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