

# Assessing the progress on and off the court



**N**ovember 26, 1978  
 Mac Court is shaking. The 10,000-plus fans jammed into the ancient structure are clapping, stamping, screaming their approval as the Oregon men's basketball team beats San Diego State 75-64 in coach Jim Haney's first game as the Oregon mentor.

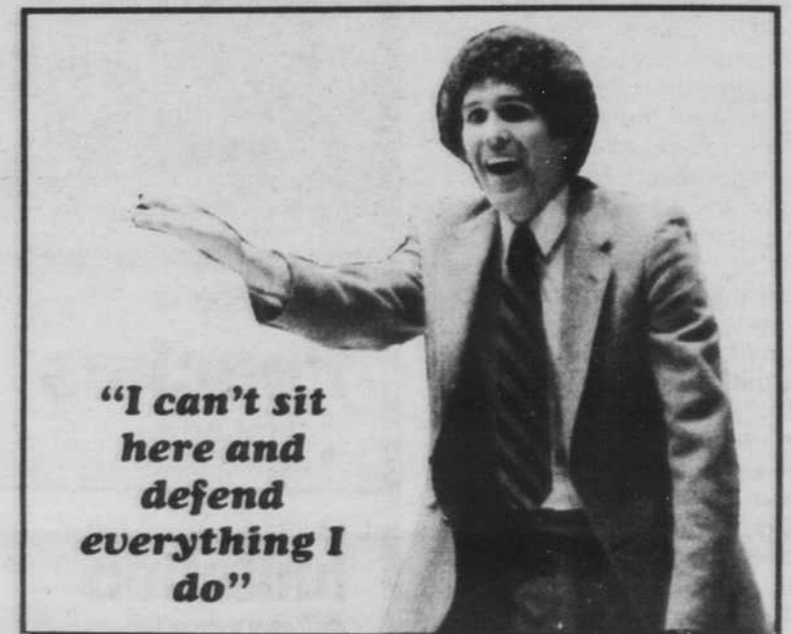
**F**ebruary 27, 1982  
 Mac Court is half empty. Bitter Pacific 10 Conference rival UCLA is coasting to an 88-66 breeze over the Ducks. The fans, the same 6,473 who loudly booed when Haney was introduced, sing a chorus of "Good-bye Haney" as the final seconds tick down on the Oregon's last home game.

**R**R-I-I-N-G. The secretary reaches for the phone. "Good morning, Oregon basketball. . . . No, coach Haney isn't in right now. . . . No, I really don't know when he's going to be in. . . ."

The pace is slow in the Oregon basketball office this March morning.

Assistant coach Stu Jackson strolls in wearing beat-up sneakers, leans on the arm of a couch, and chats with the secretary. Senior forward John Greig wanders in, filling the doorway with his 6-foot-7-inch frame. Head coach Jim Haney is at Mahlon Sweet Airport, putting a recruit onto an airplane.

It won't be until 10 a.m. that Haney arrives, sitting down behind his cleared-off desk, crossing his arms calmly as he leans back and waits for the first question.



It's not the type of atmosphere you would expect in the office of an athletic program under fire.

Jim Haney and the Oregon basketball program is the current popular target of abuse from fans and foes alike in Eugene these days.

Where once only cheers and screams echoed through venerable Mac Court, now boos rain down from the upper balconies whenever Haney's name is mentioned.irate letters fill newspaper columns calling for Haney's removal.

The groundswell of opinion climaxed this season with the dismissal of popular guard Barry Walker for comments about Haney appearing in newspapers following the lopsided loss to Oregon State. Only a public vote of confidence from his boss, Oregon athletic director Rick Bay, stemmed the tide two weeks ago.

For Haney, now 33, the criticism is not unexpected. "Your program will always be open to criticism," he says. "You have to be willing to accept that. Everybody is going to judge some way."

Haney thinks his players are holding up well under the strain. "They haven't allowed the criticism to become a reason for not winning, and that's important," he says. "When people

start criticizing a coach, it's an easy out for a player. It's too easy for them to say 'Hey, I'm not playing well because this guy can't coach.'"

The uproar this season has "hardened me to the realities of life," says Haney. "If people want to go into Mac Court and carry on, then they have to live with it. Someday, some one is going to criticize them. Those that judge the most are also the ones who are judged the most."

"But I can't sit here and defend everything I do."  
 In terms of only win-loss records, Haney's reign has seen the decline and fall of Oregon basketball. But in reestablishing human values to the game, people can only respect what Haney is trying to do with the Oregon basketball program. Both must be considered in an assessment of the Haney Era.

**T**he facts about the last four years of Oregon basketball are not on Haney's side.

- In terms of straight wins and losses, the Ducks show no improvement from Haney's first season (9-16) to this year (12-15).

- In the 71-year history of the Oregon basketball program, only one coach has gone his first four years without a winning season — Haney. In comparison, Howard Hobson, Oregon coach from 1935-44, won the NCAA championship his fourth year.

- Haney inherited a 16-11 ballclub the year he began, and styled it into a 12-15 team.

- Haney's career coaching percentage of .432 ranks the lowest of any Duck coach since Hugo Bezdek's mark of .265 in 1917.

- Of Haney's 44 wins at the Oregon helm, most have been against such cream-puffs as St. Martin's College, Nicholls State and Humboldt State. Moreover, the Ducks have never beaten UCLA in his tenure, and have defeated Oregon State just once.

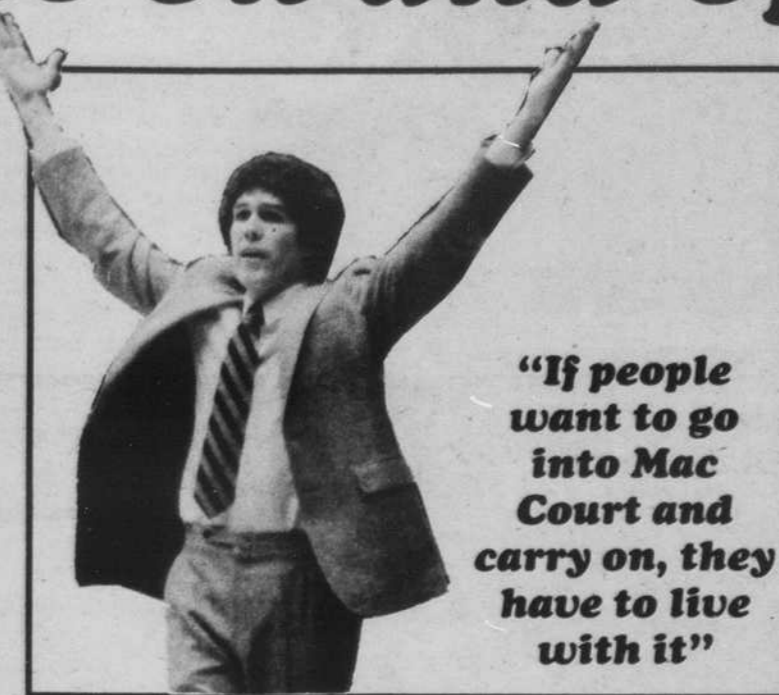
- Where there were once waiting lists to buy season tickets, now there are empty seats as home attendance slipped to 5989 per game this season.

(For more statistics on the Haney Era, see story below)  
 In this day and age, those are numbers which announce the imminent departure of a head coach. But Bay, still in his first year heading the Duck athletic program, is giving Haney time.

"Coach Haney is going to be back here next year," declares Bay. "Coach Haney has the kind of personal characteristics and sense of values that we need very badly in college athletics. I think when you have someone like that, then you go the extra mile with him."

"I think we should go another year, see where we stand a year from now, and make a decision at that point."

But Bay's patience could wear thin if another losing season occurs for the 1982-83 Duck squad. "It's not enough to just have a high sense of values and the kind of character I like to see dealing with our athletes," says Bay. "In the final analysis, you have to win. Certainly we have to win more than we lose, that's a given. But where we go beyond that I'm not sure. I'm not anxious to put number values on it, I want to see



how the season unfolds."

Haney is the first to admit that winning is going to be the ultimate judge of his tenure at Oregon. "Winning and losing is so important in our society," he says. "It's just difficult to give people philosophical things that are happening and expect them to hang their hats on it."

Winning is also important to Oregon's financial picture. The team is expected to produce \$100,000 less than predicted in ticket sales. "This team has to win back the fans," says Bay. "I don't care how much promoting you do, who coaches the team, what players we'll have. The only thing that will bring the fans back is to win."

**B**ut for all the statistics damning his Oregon career, Jim Haney is unwilling to compromise. He remains determined to keep the Oregon program his program. And to make his program work.

"I've got to do it my way," he says. "It's may not be the fastest way, but I've got to do it my way because I've got to be able to face myself."

Haney's statements come not out of stubbornness, but more with confidence. His belief in a coaching philosophy that equates basketball prowess with academic achievement and personal growth, and intertwined with compassion is unshakable.

"I'm all for winning, but there's a right way to win," says Haney. "To win and not win the right way is to have a program that I don't believe in, where say the kids are abusing their academics or they're creepy people."

In his own defense, Haney can only point out subjective areas where the Ducks are showing progress.

- "The most obvious progress is the level of talent," says Haney. "The players in this program right now have talent.

They don't know how to win yet, and a lot of them haven't logged a lot of experience, but they have ability as athletes."

- Haney maintains that the image of Oregon basketball has improved considerably from the Dick Harter/Kamikaze era. "People in Mac Court may not be happy with the way we play, but athletes around the West Coast like what we stand for and represent."

- In keeping with his philosophy, Haney believes he's elevated the caliber of student/athletes in the program. "To sustain a quality program, you need to bring kids who are good students."

- "The general attitude of our kids," Haney says is another area of improvement. "They're growing as human beings and becoming more responsible."

But the progress Haney maintains his Ducks are making is difficult to detect by frustrated, win-starved Oregon fans. "Unless you're going to be there and live it, day in and day out, you can't know," Haney admits.

"Their record doesn't indicate it, but we're a better team now than we were six weeks ago."

"And yet we're not winning, and that's what people want to see."

**R**ick Bay would like nothing more than to have the best of both worlds. "The best thing we could ever have is to have a guy like coach Haney to also be successful," he says. "That kind of person is the ultimate role model in college athletics."

"You give that person the opportunity to develop their coaching technique, fundamentals and philosophies. The only question is, how long do we wait?"

Oregon fans are tired of waiting. The boo-birds who flock to Mac Court have made up their minds about Jim Haney and his program, and the Oregon coach is aware of it.

"Everybody is going to judge some way. You can either look at us and say, 'Hey, I like the way they play, they're young, I can understand why they're not winning, but they're playing hard.'"

"Or they can say, 'Hey, I want to win. I don't care what they're doing, how many points they're scoring, they're not winning and I want to win.'"

"Each person's got to make that decision. I can't make it for them."

Story by Steve Spatz  
 Photos by Bob Baker



## For the record: the Haney chronicle

### 1978-79

Season record — 12-15 Pac-10 record — 7-11

"The reason I'm not as concerned with winning as most people is that I'm not afraid to lose — winning is not the beginning and it is not the end."

Avg. Mac Court attendance — 10,000 (91 consecutive sellouts)

### 1979-80

Season record — 10-17 Pac-10 record — 5-13

Dan Hartshorne, Paul Bain dis-

missed from squad in December.

Three players — Rich Davis, Phil Barner, and Stu Lyon — leave squad before season.

Quotes from Haney: "I think we're a better basketball team, but now we're going to have to go out and prove it."

Avg. Mac Court attendance — 8,963

### 1980-81

Season record — 13-14 Pac-10 record — 6-12

Ray Whiting, '79-80 MVP misses most of the season with personal

problems.

Quotes from Haney: "I'm getting a little tired of being the one who loses."

Avg. Mac Court attendance — 9,102

### 1981-82

Season record — 9-16 Pac-10 record — 4-12

Barry Walker dismissed from squad in mid-season.

Quotes from Haney: "This team has just enough talent to get me fired."

Avg. Mac Court attendance — 5989

Dinners from \$4.95: Spanakopitta, Souvlaki, Marinated Trout, Moussaka, Yiros. . . .

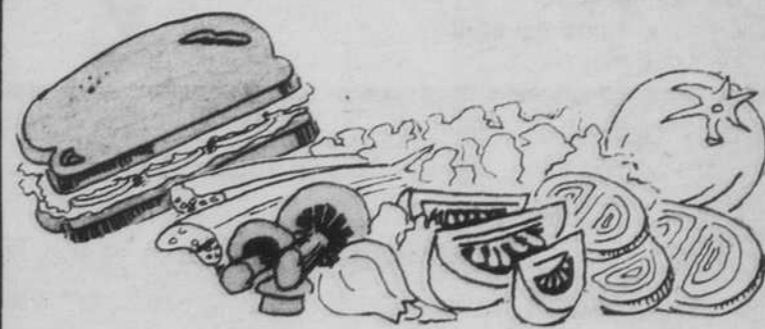
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