

# Oregon colors the Cardinal red, 68-61

By Brent De La Paz  
Of the Emerald

Oregon center Blair Rasmussen described the Stanford University men's basketball team as a bunch that "don't mind smashing their faces on the floor."

For the most part Saturday afternoon in McArthur Court, it was the Ducks, who administered most of punishment, as they tallied up a 68-61 victory over the Cardinal to keep their post-season playoff hopes alive.

The win moved Oregon into sixth place in the Pacific-10 Conference, 8-8 and pushed the Ducks' overall past the .500 mark to 15-14.

More importantly, Oregon kept in the running for a possible bid to the National Invitation Tournament with the win, which moved the Ducks into sixth place in the league.

Stanford, who dropped to 3-13 in the Pac-10 and 11-15 overall, is a physical team that plays a hard-nosed game resembling the type found on the playgrounds of New York City. The Cardinal wear teams down with an aggressive full-court trap.

In the first half, the game appeared to be a blowout for Oregon. The Ducks jumped out on Stanford quickly and raced to a 14-4 lead by hitting six of their first eight shots.

Rasmussen led the first-half rout with 12 points as the Ducks built a 30-18 halftime lead. Oregon was hitting a torrid 65 percent of its shots (13-20), while Stanford was having problems with the Ducks' 2-2-1 zone. The Cardinal could only muster a 36 percent ratio on seven of 19 from the field.

Oregon's lead ballooned to 17 points when the Ducks outscored Stanford 7-2 with 15:39 left in the contest. The game appeared to be Oregon's.

But as Oregon coach Don Monson has said all season long, it's tough to keep big leads in the Pac-10 because of the league's parity. Monson's words rang true as the Cardinal slowly crept back in the game.

"Watching the last part of the game, I don't like to coach it," Monson said. "The clock never seems to move."

The clock did move, but not before Stanford had cut Oregon's 17-point lead

to a meager three within the next 13 minutes. After the timeout, the Cardinal posted a 12-2 run that sliced Oregon's lead to seven, 39-32 with 13:04 remaining.

Oregon cooled down from its blistering shooting in the second half, while the Cardinal began finding its range with some aggressive offensive play behind Earl Koberlein (15 points) and John Williams (10 points).

The once insurmountable Oregon lead of 17 was cut to a mere five points, 41-36 when Williams hit an 18-footer with 11:15 left. The Ducks woke up from the nightmarish four-minute span to find themselves battling to stay ahead.

"It was a different kind of game," Monson said of the last ten minutes.

That game included the Oregon lead jumping between five and 10 points in the next eight minutes. However, Stanford finally closed within three, 58-55 on Andy Fischer's driving basket at the 2:57 mark. Oregon was also without guard Rick Osborn, who fouled out with 5:32 remaining.

Senior reserve Mike Matheson replac-

ed Osborn and was put in the pressure spot of inboundng the ball. Matheson got the ball out, despite the presence of 6-11 Cardinal Greg Butler.

With 2:14 remaining, the Cardinal whittled the lead to three on a Koberlein 4-foot hook shot, 60-57, and Oregon called time out. Monson knew the Cardinal would foul, making the Ducks win or lose the game at the free-throw line.

Oregon hit six of six shots in the last two minutes. Rasmussen made two, then guard Chris Harper nailed another two to give Oregon a 66-61 lead with 28 seconds left. Guard Anthony Taylor clinched the victory by sinking two shots with 20 seconds left.

Oregon hit 22 of 26 from the free-throw line in the second half. Taylor was particularly deadly at the foul line as the 6-4 freshman hit 14 of 16 for 22 points and a game-high eight assists.

"I feel in the groove," Taylor said. "I just wish it had come a little earlier."

Rasmussen led all scorers with 23 points, 12 rebounds and an impressive five blocked shots.

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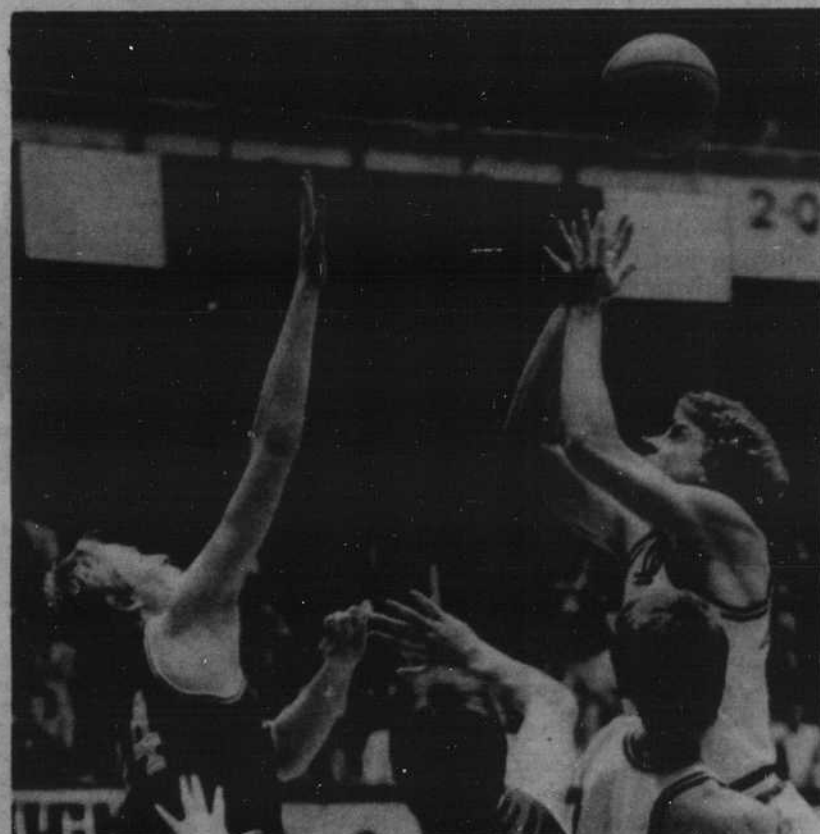


Photo by Ross Martin  
Oregon's Mike Matheson (12) attempts a shot over the outstretched arms of Stanford University's Greg Butler (44).

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