Sports

Women play tough, but lose

By Dennis Fernandes Of the Emerald

The Lady Ducks played tough against a ranked team for the second consecutive game. but could not quite get over the hump and register the win.

Point guard Penny Toler. labeled "a sure Olympian" by Oregon women's basketball coach Elwin Heiny, dazzled the Ducks for a game-high 26 points to help seventh-ranked Long Beach State University to an 82-69 non-conference victory Friday night at McArthur Court.

The 49ers also took advantage of 14 second-half points from 6-foot-2 All-American Cindy Brown to break open a close game. The Portland native had a frustrating first half with only four points.

The loss overshadowed an oustanding performance by Oregon's Gabi Neumann. The 6-foot-5 senior center had 24 points, snared 12 rebounds and blocked five shots in 37 minutes of physical basketball.

The rest of the Ducks seemed to follow Neumann's lead because they were not to be intimidated by the physical 49ers.

Whether it was one of Shelly Ray's eight rebounds or Carol Drouet's behind-the-back manipulation of a relentless Long Beach press, there was never a moment that any of 1.105 fans doubted the Ducks' determination.

"Long Beach is a potential Final Four team, and we played with them. I really appreciated the team's effort out there tonight." Heiny said.

Heiny also got stalwart play from 6-foot-3 forward Kris Glidden, who started in place of Shelly Ray for rebounding purposes. She responded accordingly, scoring 16 points and grabbing 10 boards.

This isn't to say the coach is satisfied with just a hearty performance. After two straight losses at home. Heiny wants the "W."

"We were doing well the first half, we just need to follow through for that second half." he said. "The key is winning these games."

In the beginning, however, it looked like the 49ers would steamroll before a sweat was broken. A pressure defense and some giddy Oregon nerves resulted in two quick turnovers and a 6-0 lead for Long Beach.

After settling down to slow the game and stay within striking distance, the Ducks returned the defensive favor and got right back in it. Neumann scored seven straight points, and her three-point play with 4:13 left in the first half gave Oregon its first lead of the night. 26-25.

The lead seesawed back and forth for the rest of the half, and the Ducks closed the halftime margin to one with Neumann's easy basket with 22 seconds left.

Incredibly enough. Oregon held a team averaging almost 97 points per game in three contests, to just 35 first-half points. Offensively, however, the Ducks were a cold-shooting 32 percent from the floor while missing some easy shots down low.

"We should have had a comfortable lead at halftime if we would have hit the easy shots." Heiny said.

"Neumann and Glidden (forward Kris) were really hurting us in the first half," said 49er coach Joan Bonvicini. "We were playing their game. a slow down offense, and we needed to get out and run."

Brown's poor first-half performance also helped the Ducks, but she came back the second half for six of 12 from the field and two free throws. opening up the offense outside for Toler and the 49ers.

"Cindy is quicker than their

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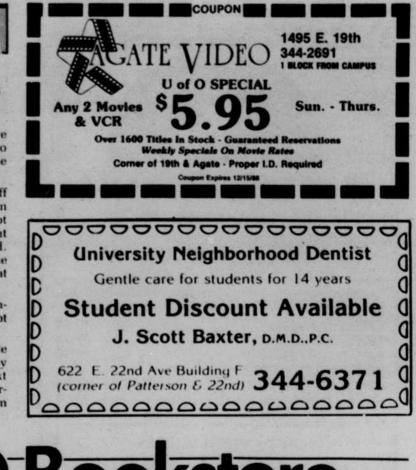
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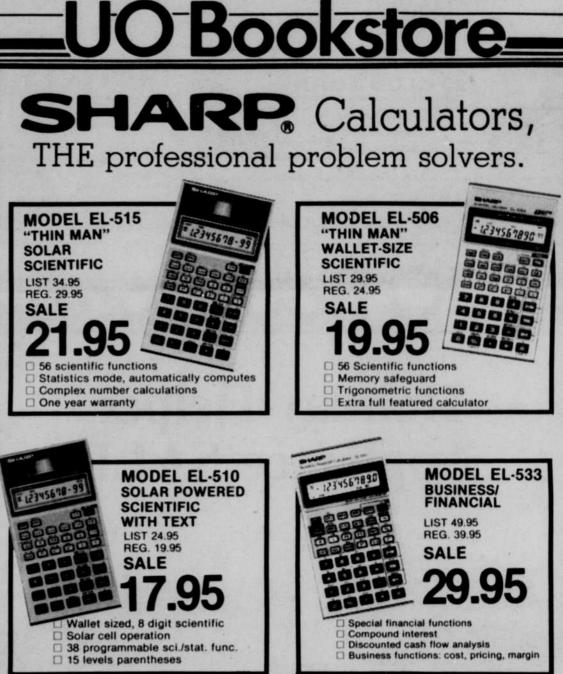
(Oregon's) post people. so we encouraged her to drive and go inside instead of taking the jumper." Bonvicini said.

Whatever the case. it was off to the races for Long Beach in the second half. Oregon kept close for about 13 minutes, but was eventually overwhelmed. Three straight layups for the 49ers broke Oregon's back at 62-54.

"Down the stretch, their consistency and athletic ability got to us." Heiny said.

The schedule will get a little easier for the Ducks now. They will be on the road next weekend at Gonzaga University's Bulldog Invitational in Spokane, Wash.







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