

Taylor named Pacific 10 Player of the Week

Ducks overcome adversity, turn back Arizona

By Dennis Fernandes
Of the Emerald

If Santa handed out any adversity for Christmas, he sure gave a load of it to the University men's basketball team.

Forward Kenny Sprague's aching knees forced him to the sidelines for the Ducks' opening Pacific 10 Conference counters with Stanford University and University of California at Berkeley. Anthony Taylor was injured and kept out of the opening round tilt with Southwestern Louisiana University at the Fred Meyer Far West Classic in Portland. Starting guard David Girley was suspended for the final two games of the Classic for curfew violations. Reserve forward and sometime starter Jesse Nash was held out for one game due to the same violation.

that three-point shot at the end of the overtime, but we had a tough time getting shots inside," the coach said.

Taylor's 20-point effort against a commendable Wildcat defense, coupled with 25 points against Arizona State University last Friday, earned the 6-foot-4 guard Pac-10 Player of the Week honors. People are still singing about his soaring dunk over ASU's Rich Carlino late in the second half of that game.

"I can't say enough about his playing and his mental attitude, especially with all the box-on-one's (defenses) he's been seeing," Monson said.

Unfortunately, Taylor cannot do it all, and the Ducks have some problems to iron out.

Mastering the full-court press defense is bound to cause Monson and his staff a

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But thanks to the emergence of Rick Osborn, the strong return of Girley and Taylor's all-World performances, Oregon is much better off than the situation would render.

Saturday's 55-54, upset victory over University of Arizona, a team many picked to be the conference favorite, caps two weeks of up-and-down, but relatively successful, basketball. Oregon has won four of their last five games and is now 8-5 overall and 2-2 in Pac-10 play.

The win over the Wildcats proved to the Ducks that, yes Virginia, Oregon can come from behind and win a basketball game in its waning seconds. In a defensive, low-scoring encounter where every basket was an adventure, Oregon clawed their way back from a nine-point deficit with six minutes left and eventually put the game into overtime.

Coach Don Monson was quick to disclaim any notion that the victory might instill any notion that Oregon's problems are over.

"Only the future will tell how important it (the win) is. It is important right now in that we could not afford to lose any more Pac-10 games, particularly at home," he said.

Monson also has not changed his mind about the new three-point rule, saying he "still despises the thing." It was Girley's howitzer with three seconds left that put the Ducks over the hump for the final margin. "I don't know why we called

few sleepless nights. It proved to be the difference in a 57-50 loss at the championship game of the Classic against impressive Louisiana Tech. ASU's quickness and depth on the press let them back into the game on two occasions.

"We are trying to be more aggressive and work on coming to the ball. We should be attacking it (the press)," Monson said.

Rebounding, or the lack of it, has been another source of Oregon headaches. After relatively good success against nine non-conference opponents, the Ducks have only outrebounded Arizona (30-29) in four Pac-10 contests. The 6-foot-6 Sprague and his sore knees are needed badly in this department, and look for more aggressiveness from 6-foot-11 Sven Meyer and starting forward Keith Balderston.

The Classic saw Oregon's play sometimes spotty, but the Ducks registered two quick victories over Southeastern Louisiana and San Jose State University. The opening round game saw Taylor go down with muscle spasms in his neck after scoring just six points in 13 minutes. Osborn, who has been struggling of late and was basically a no-show in Oregon's scheme of things, responded wonderfully with a season-high 15 points in leading the Ducks to a 78-73 victory.

The semifinal matchup against San

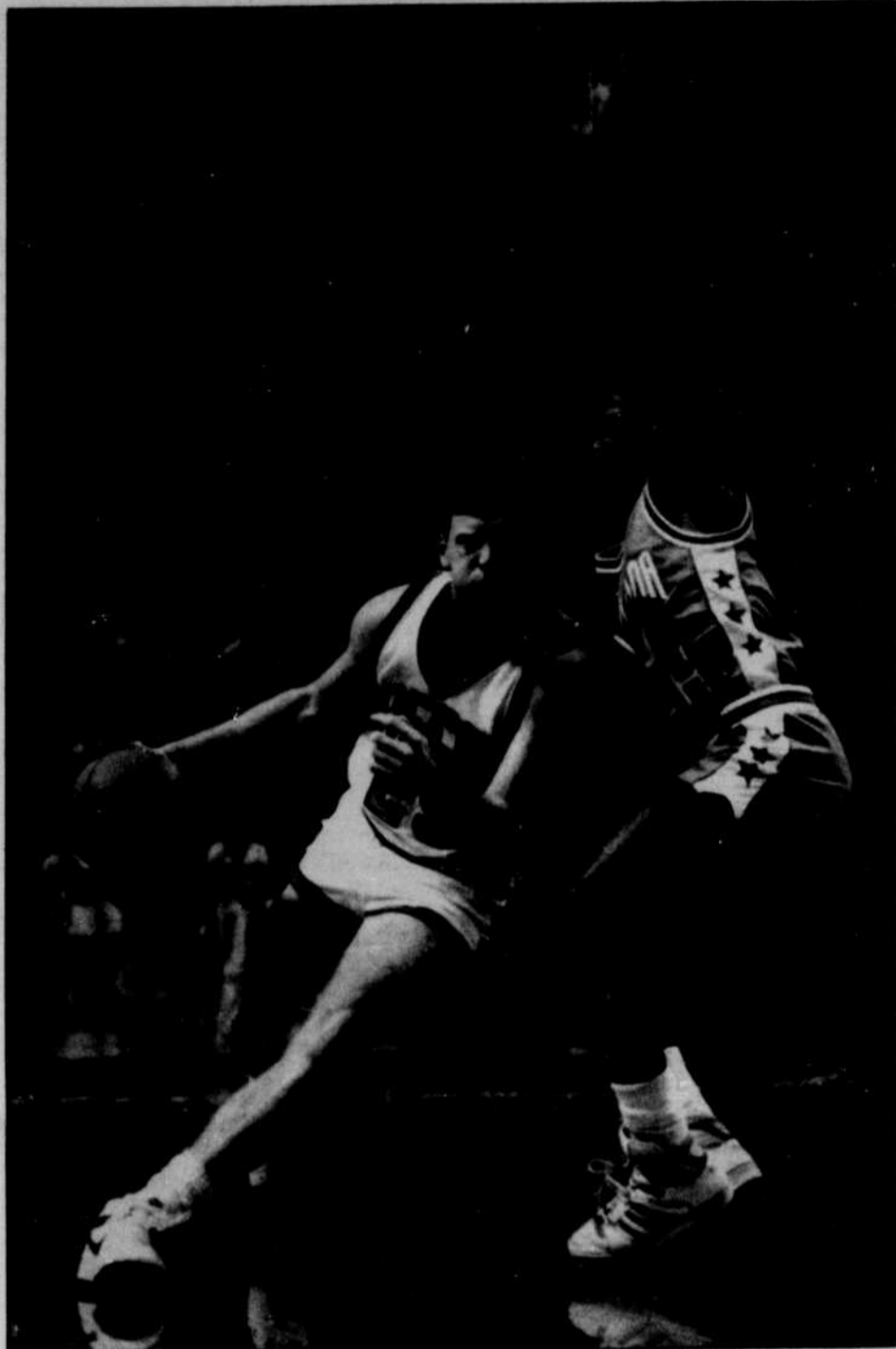


Photo by Michael Wilhelm

Rick Osborn tries to cut through the Louisiana Tech defense in the finals of the Fred Meyer Far West Classic. The Bulldogs prevailed, 57-50.

Jose State had Oregon minus two key players in Girley, who had a game-high 19 points the previous night, and Nash. They apparently violated curfew regulations and were suspended for two and one games, respectively. Taylor came back with 20 points, the center Meyer had 11 boards and 17 points, and Sprague offered up an inspirational 16

points and 11 rebounds in the 69-64 win.

The offense was a no-show the following night against an impressive Bulldog squad, Oregon's first appearance in the Classic finals since the overtime thriller with Oregon State University in 1983. Taylor, who made the all-tournament team, scored 28 of Oregon's 50 points.

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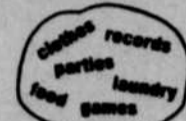
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