

Duck women try to grasp share of conference lead

By Dennis Fernandes
Of the Emerald

If last weekend's heroics weren't enough, the Oregon women's basketball team faces an even bigger challenge tonight when they face conference-leading University of Washington.

Game time at McArthur Court is scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

The Ducks avenged two early-season losses last weekend when they hosted USC and UCLA. They hope to add to a long list of feats by harboring revenge for another loss tonight, as the Huskies are the only conference team the Ducks have not topped.

Washington's 69-57 disposal of the Ducks last month in Seattle marks the last loss for Oregon, now riding the crest of an eight-game winning streak.

Oregon, now 11-3 in Pac-10 play and 19-5 overall, finally cracked the nation's Top 20 list for the first time in almost five years as The Associated Press' 20th-ranked club.

Rankings, coach Elwin Heiny stresses, will only be important when NCAA tournament seedings are announced in a few weeks. However, the ranking will hold little meaning if the Ducks cannot pull off their 20th victory of the season tonight.

The conference race is cluttered near the top, but Oregon can simplify things by winning the remaining four games. The Ducks can capture at least a share for the Pac-10 lead with two wins this weekend. What happens next week depends on the play of Washington and USC, currently lodged in second-place at 12-3.

The 12-point loss to the Huskies marks the biggest margin by which any team has beaten the Ducks. The disappointing loss left the Ducks 4-3 in Pac-10 play, and things were unsettled in the Oregon camp.

In that game, Oregon held up to a seven-

point lead but was outscored 23-8 in the last six minutes. The team coughed up 20 turnovers and shot only 37 percent from the field. Leading scorer Lauri Landerholm hit only five of 16 field goal attempts for 14 points.

The Huskies will probably not recognize this team. The top gun Landerholm has scored 20 or more points in the last five contests, and she is now flanked by a host of other players who are now fitting their roles.

The Ducks have gotten some key minutes out of less notables Jacquie Semeniuk and Sheila Sattiewhite. And the front three — Kris Glidden, Stefanie Kasperski, and Gabi Neumann — have been playing out of this world and boast Oregon's most potent scoring threat.

Heiny thinks the Ducks finally came into their own just recently. "I think the second time we played Oregon State (a 71-51 blowout in Corvallis) showed that. We are gradually finding what we need to do to be successful," he said.

One matter Oregon used to have difficulty with was getting into an offensive groove against a good defense. They had better have overcome that dilemma, for Washington leads the league in scoring defense.

"They did a very good job of fronting the post last time. They apply pressure on the ball as well as away from the ball, so they deny the passing lanes very well," Heiny said.

Lisa Oriard leads the 20-4 Huskies in scoring at a 14.6 clip.

Neumann became the fourth Oregon player to win Pac-10 Player of the Week honors this season. The 6-foot-5 senior tallied 40 points and 19 rebounds while shooting 55 percent from the field last weekend.

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season was during the 1974-75 campaign when the four games were decided by a total of eight points.

The Ducks haven't won in their last four trips to Seattle and no game in the last six years between Oregon and WSU has been decided by more than seven points.

The Huskies are suffering from a late-season slump, losing four of their last five contests, including three consecutive road defeats. But Washington has been outstanding at home this season, flaunting an 8-2 mark in Edmundson Pavilion.

The Oregon-Washington matchup should shed light on the rankings for the Pac-10 tournament (March 5-8), as the Ducks and Huskies are deadlocked in fifth place with identical 8-8 records.

"Road games are something we've had problems with, but it won't be a mental block," Monson said. "The problem is Washington's talent, particularly on the front line."

All-America center Chris Welp continues to stand out for the Huskies, averaging 20.8 points and 9.1 rebounds a contest. Guards Phil Zevenberger and Greg Hill are also con-

tributing offensively, averaging 15.8 and 11.0 a game, respectively.

The Cougars, losers of three straight, are fighting to keep out of the league cellar. WSU is a half game ahead of USC in the standings with a 4-12 mark.

Forwards Brian Quinnett (15.7 points a game) and Joe Wallace (14.9) lead Washington State's offensive attack. Center Dwayne Scholten is the Cougars' top rebounder with 9.2 per game.

Taylor continues to lead the Ducks in scoring, averaging 19.6 a game. The junior sensation had cracked the 20-point barrier 14 times in Oregon's first 18 games, but has not accomplished the feat in eight games because of smothering defenses, dating back to his 22-point performance against WSU.

Despite his slump of late, Taylor needs only three points to pass his personal one-season best of 477 points in 28 games last season. He also needs only 24 points to crack the top 10 one-season scoring list and one more than that to become only the seventh Oregon player to notch more than 500 points in one season.



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