

Ducks burn Wildcats, capture 68-63 thriller

By Tracy Sumner
Emerald Sports Editor

Something shocking happened on the way to No. 2 ranked Arizona's romp over Oregon in last night's Pacific-10 Conference basketball opener for both teams.

It didn't happen. The Ducks, behind the 27 points, seven assists and seven rebounds from sophomore guard Terrell Brandon, handed the Wildcats a stunning 68-63 upset before a frenzied McArthur Court crowd of 7,332.

"Obviously, I couldn't be prouder," Oregon coach Don Monson said. "Talk about a bunch of young kids battling the whole time. They just seemed to fight through one thing after another.

"It has to be the best win since I've been here," he said. "We just did the things we had to do. It's just a great win."

Oregon, which had lost 10 straight games, took an early 8-2 lead and led almost the whole way en route to the win, its first over Arizona since the 1987 Pac-10 tournament.

Brandon, making his Pac-10 debut, hit four of five 3-pointers in the first half and scored 14 points to lead the Ducks to leads as large as 10 points on the way to a 41-35 lead at the break.

The Ducks stretched their lead to 45-35 just 36 seconds into the second half on a basket by forward Keith Reynolds and a Brandon dunk. Reynolds scored on a reverse layup with 11:55 remaining in the game to give Oregon a 52-42 lead.

Arizona, which had its streak of 14 Pac-10 wins broken, went on a 16-5 tear over the next 7:23 to take a 58-57 lead on a basket by sophomore center Brian Williams.

Reynolds scored from 10 feet. Brandon hit a 15-footer and Oregon center Richard Lucas hit a free throw to give the Ducks a 62-58 lead with 1:23 left.

After Sean Rooks scored for Arizona on a rebound with 1:10 remaining to pull the Wildcats to within 62-60, Brandon hit four free throws down the stretch to help seal the win. Junior guard Kevin Nixon hit two free throws with one second remaining to provide the final margin.

"We set some things up for him and he was tough," Monson said of the 5-foot-11-inch Brandon. "I'm sure Arizona didn't think he was that good either because they scouted us at Arkansas."

Brandon played only 14 minutes before fouling out of last Sunday's 102-75 loss to the Razorbacks, but came back with a vengeance against the Wildcats. Brandon said the Arkan-

sas game was extra motivation for Arizona.

"I thought I let people down," Brandon said. "I really let my team down. I didn't play well. I got into foul trouble in the first five minutes of the game.

"This game, I kept my hands to myself and tried to play as hard as I could," he said. "Obviously, we came out victorious and we're really happy."

Brandon said the win over the two-time Pac-10 champion Wildcats was the highlight of his career.

"This is the best," Brandon said. "All the things I've done in high school is in the past. Beating the second best team in the nation just really means a lot.

"We played hard, we played together, we played as a team," he said. "We practiced hard all week for this game. It just can't get any better than this."

Although Arizona was heavily favored coming into the game, Monson and his players believed in their hearts they could beat the Wildcats.

"That's the last thing I asked them before they went out to play," Monson said. "I pointed at each one of them and asked them if they believed they could win.

"You gotta believe you can win deep down or it will never get done," he said. "If you don't get back on defense, pound the boards and take care of the basketball, they (the Wildcats) are too good and you can't win.

"If you do those things, you can win," he said.

Reynolds, who finished with 13 points, said he knew what the Ducks were capable of Thursday night.

"I woke up this morning and that was the first thing I thought," Reynolds said. "I said we're going to get with Arizona. That's what we wanted to do and that's what we did. We battled them big time."



Photo by Andre Rameri

Sophomore guard Terrell Brandon (no. 10) led Oregon with 27 points in the Ducks' 68-63 upset of Arizona.

Lucas, who scored 11 points and grabbed nine rebounds, agreed with Reynolds.

"We worked in practice against what they run," Lucas said. "We watched them on film and watched them right before we went upstairs to play. We worked hard and we did it. We believed in our hearts we could beat them.

"They're the number two team in the nation," he said. "This is probably the greatest victory I have ever had. I know it's up there with coach Monson, too."

Although they combined for only three points, freshmen Aaron Johnson and Bob Fife were big factors in the game.

Johnson had five rebounds and Fife had two blocked shots in the final minutes to secure the win.

"Johnson and Fife did an outstanding job," Monson said. "I've never had two freshmen come in a game like that and contribute as much as they did."

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