

Ducks topple Utes, 73-66, in Mac Court battle

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Reporter

Oregon's 73-66 basketball win over Utah in McArthur Court Thursday night can best be described as one of overcoming obstacles.

After playing in Birmingham, Ala. on Tuesday night, the Ducks flew home on Wednesday and practiced as soon as they got back to the campus. Oregon was also without the services of small forward Keith Reynolds who will miss the next two to three weeks with a knee injury.

But the Ducks persevered be-

hind the backcourt play of Terrell Brandon and the inside work of Eric Dunn, Richard Lucas and Bob Fife.

Brandon, Oregon's money man, scored a game-high 27 points, 16 in the second half, and added eight assists to lead the way.

Dunn picked up some of the scoring slack due to Reynolds' injury with a career-high 13 points, hitting six of 10 shots from the field.

Lucas and Fife had their usual stellar performances; Lucas scoring 11 points and grabbing eight rebounds, Fife coming off the bench for six points, seven

rebounds and four blocked shots. Guard Kevin Mixon also added 13 points.

"That's a good game for Eric because he needs that to help his confidence," Oregon coach Don Monson said, "and Fife very well could have been the difference in the game."

"It's always important you have balance because I knew they would try and take our guards out of it," he said.

Brandon admitted the Ducks might have been a little tired coming into the game, but said that was just something Oregon had to deal with.

"We came straight back and practiced yesterday, but we had a good practice," he said. "We showed we were tired, but that's basketball. The people don't care if we're tired because they want to see us play."

The Ducks looked like they might blow the Utes out in the game's opening minutes, running out to an 8-2 lead, but Utah came right back to take a 10-8 lead.

Keith Chapman started hitting from the outside for Utah, and when Walter Watts hit a free throw with 5:34 remaining in the first half, the Utes had a 29-21 lead.

But Brandon and Fife brought the Ducks within 33-32 entering the lockerroom as Brandon scored seven points in the run and Fife scored on an offensive rebound.

Tommy Connor quickly changed things in the opening minutes of the second half, scoring six of Utah's first eight points as the Utes opened up a 41-36 lead.

The Ducks answered with a 12-0 run, triggered by two Brandon baskets, a Fife block that led to a three-point play by Dunn and a Lucas dunk off a Brandon feed to give Oregon a

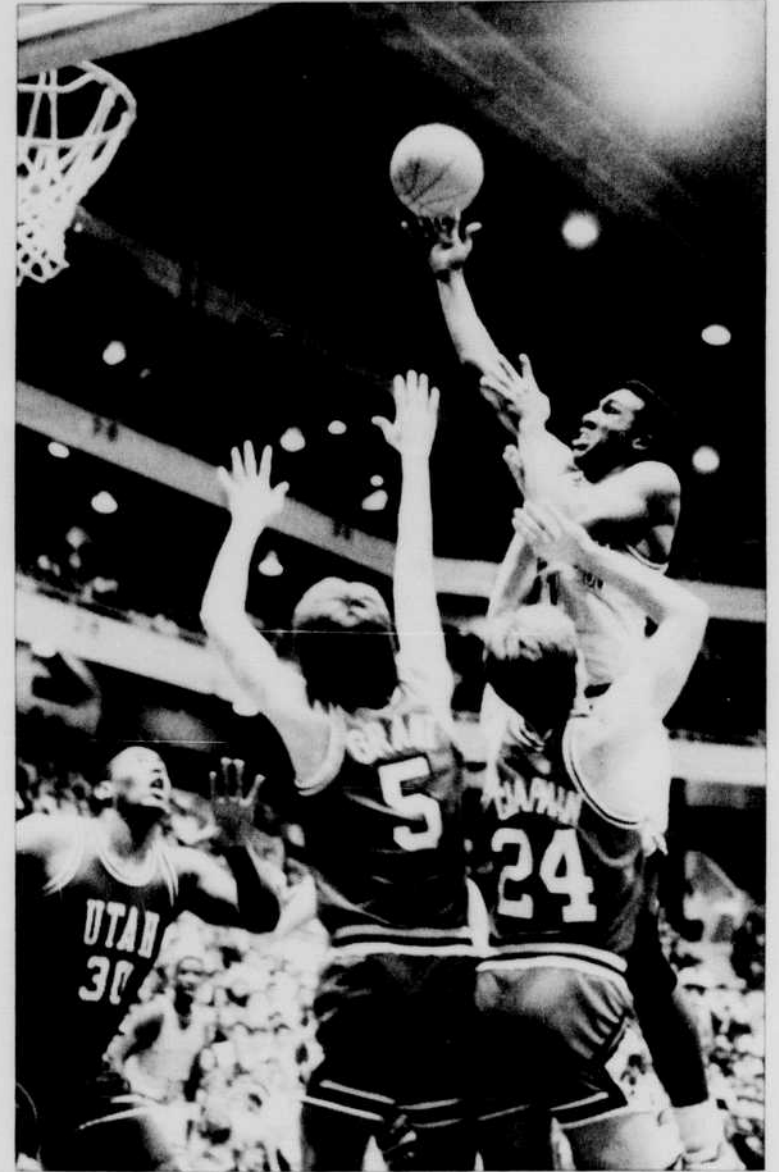


Photo by Martin Thiel

Richard Lucas drives to the hoop over three Utah defenders to help lead the Ducks to a 73-66 win over the Thursday night in Mac Court.

48-41 lead with 12:03 left.

The Ducks increased the lead to 60-49 and still led 62-52 with 5:33 remaining. Utah's Josh Grant, who scored 30 points Tuesday night against Washington, started to get hot from outside and the Utes came

back.

Grant scored eight points in about three minutes and pulled Utah within 66-63 with 2:58 to play, but that's when Brandon took over.

Brandon scored a three-point play, hit an outside jumper and helped Oregon control the clock in the waning moments to improve to 3-2 on the year.

Monson felt that most important part of the game was how well his team handled the obstacles they were up against.

"I thought it was a good, hard-nosed game," he said. "I thought my kids played real competitively and they hung in there and did a good job with all the traveling and everything."

Duck Notes: Oregon hosts Portland on Saturday at 7:30 p.m. The Ducks Dec. 16 home game with Nevada-Reno has been moved up to 1:05 p.m. so football fans can see the Independence Bowl on television.

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