

# Ducks meet Wildcats in Tucson

By Ashley Conklin  
Emerald Sports Reporter

Arguably the two hottest teams in the Pacific-10 Conference meet in the hotbed of college basketball — Arizona's McKale Center — in a key Pac-10 basketball game Thursday.

Oregon and Arizona square off tonight at 7:35 MST in a showdown of teams that are peaking at just the right time as postseason play looms right around the corner.

The Ducks, winners of four straight games, are all alone in fourth place in the conference standings at 10-6 and are 15-10 overall. The Wildcats have won nine straight Pac-10 games after losing to UCLA 73-67 back on Jan. 13.

Arizona, 13-3 in the Pac-10 and 19-6 overall is ranked 23rd after a 78-76 loss to Duke last Sunday. Before the loss to Duke, the Wildcats thrived on California and Stanford on the road, but were even more dangerous at home, owning a 45-game win streak in McKale Center, the longest home win streak in the nation.

Although most people see the Oregon-State-Arizona showdown as the big game in Tucson this week with first place in the Pac-10 at stake, Olson is more concerned with the Ducks, who beat Arizona 68-63 back on Nov. 30.

"I was impressed with them when we played them in Eugene," Olson said. "I thought this would be (coach) Don's (Monson) best team since he's been there. There is no question that flat out the Oregon game is the most important game to us, not Oregon State."

Unlike the last two Arizona teams that easily won the Pac-10 regular season title and post-season tournaments, this Wildcat team has only three seniors and a horde of young, talented players who, Olson said, are starting to come on.

"A lot of good things are beginning to happen to this team," Olson said in his telephone press conference Tuesday. "The big guys are really coming into their own."

The big guys Olson referred to are 6-foot-11 sophomores Brian Williams and Sean Rooks

and 7-0 freshman Ed Stokes.

Williams, a transfer from Maryland, has really blossomed as a starter. Williams averages 11.1 points and 5.5 rebounds per contest and is coming off one of his best games, a 19-point, nine-rebound performance against Duke.

Olson has now gone with Stokes as his starting center for the last nine games and he has tallied 12.4 points over that span, including eight straight games in double figures.

Meanwhile, Rooks has come off the bench to spell Williams and Stokes and has chipped in 12.5 points per game, but has averaged 16 points per game in the last six games.

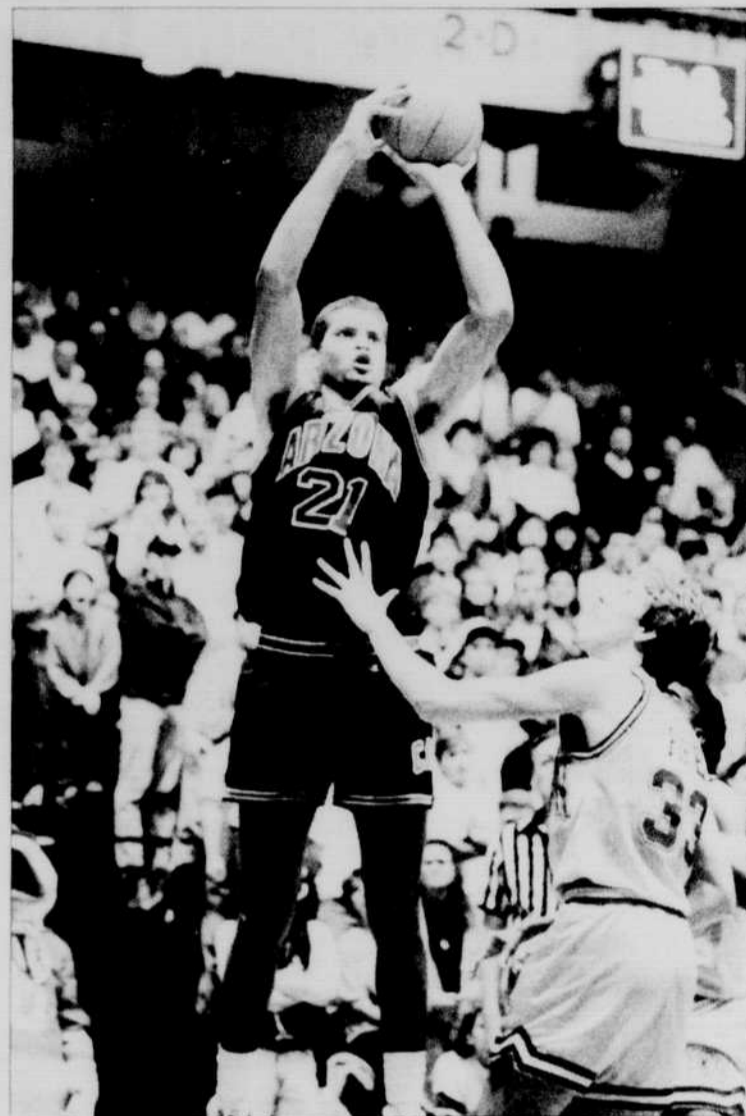
Along with forward Tad Buechler and guard Matt Muehlebach, the three big men have carried the load for the Wildcats lately and their play has earned rave reviews from Olson.

"They are posting up better than they were earlier," Olson said. "I thought they really worked well together against Duke. All of them enjoy playing with one another, regardless of which combination of the two is in there."

Rooks and Williams both had good games against the Ducks last time out as Rooks had nine points and 12 rebounds while Williams had 19 points and seven rebounds. However, Arizona had no answer to Oregon point guard Terrell Brandon.

Brandon had 27 points, seven rebounds and seven assists and controlled the game as guards Muehlebach, Matt Othick and Harvey Mason couldn't compensate for Brandon's quickness.

"You have a guy like Bran-



File photo

Arizona's Brian Williams (21) shoots over Oregon's Bob Fife in the Ducks' 68-63 win earlier in the season. Williams and Fife will square off again Thursday as the Wildcats battle Oregon in Arizona's McKale Center.

don who is very quick, athletic and can make a lot of things happen," Olson said. "The thing that makes it tough is that he can drill it from outside and penetrate either direction."

Game Notes: With a win this

week against either Arizona or Arizona State, the Ducks can finish no worse than fifth in the final Pac-10 standings. ... Brandon and Keith Reynolds lead Oregon in scoring with 18.0 and 15.9 points per game.

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Moderator, Marlene Drescher, Director, Office of Student Advocacy. This is another in a series of opportunities for students to meet with the president to discuss issues of mutual concern.

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