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SPORTS

Ducks ugly in first half, lose 90-55

By Jayson Jacoby
Emerald Sports Reporter

Whatever the rest of the season brings for the Oregon men's basketball team, at least things probably won't get any worse than the first half of Thursday's 90-55 loss to Washington State in front of only 5,371 at McArthur Court.

Murphy's Law caught up with the Ducks (5-9 overall and 1-4 in the Pacific-10 Conference) in a big way during the first twenty minutes of their fourth-straight league loss. Those four defeats have been by an average of 28 points per contest.

"Obviously we played poorly, and they shot the ball pretty well," Oregon coach Don Monson said. "What bothered me was we didn't play hard. At least you only have to live with this for one day."

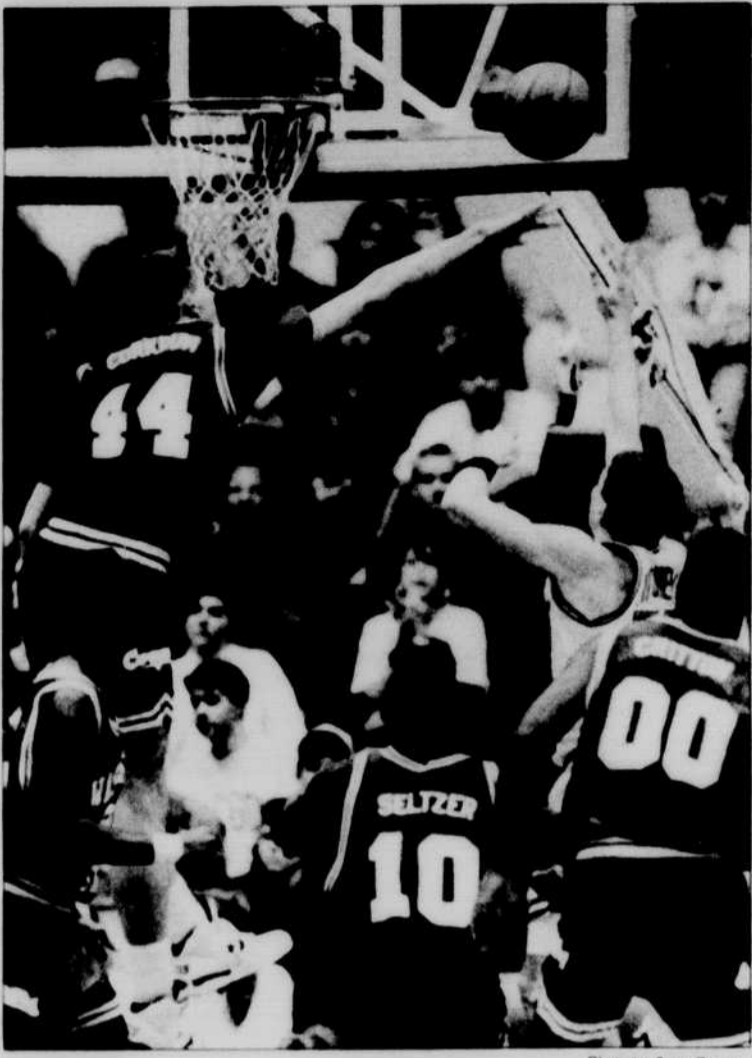
Oregon's first half woes jump off the stat sheet. The Ducks made just five field goals en route to a 41-17 halftime deficit. Oregon missed all six of its three-point attempts and shot a frigid 25 percent from the field, while committing 13 turnovers.

Meanwhile, the Cougars (13-4, 1-3) were shooting 54 percent on 15 of 28, including five of nine treys. Terrence Lewis did most of the damage, hitting four of five from long range on the way to 16 of his game-high 22 points.

The Ducks had problems beyond mere numbers, though.

Oregon's offense was completely shut down by Washington State's tenacious man-to-man defense. None of the Ducks' five field goals came from designed plays, and Oregon had to settle mainly for off-balance, low percentage shots.

Even worse, all five Oregon starters seemed glued to the floor. None moved consistently without the ball, and all failed



Washington State's Rob Corkrum blocks a shot attempt by Oregon's Matt O'Neil during Thursday's game. Photo by Sean Poston

to meet passes, resulting in numerous Cougar steals.

"Our battle cry all week at practice was to pressure the wings and the guards," Washington State coach Kelvin Sampson said. "We felt we could take them out of their offense. We wanted to force them to throw the ball inside because that's not their strong point."

Oregon didn't have a strong point in the first half, and a

frustrated Monson benched the starters three minutes before halftime in favor of the second team.

"I thought they would come in and play hard, and they did," Monson said. "I didn't think it could get any worse than it was at that time and it didn't."

The Ducks never led in the game, and with Lewis bombing in open three-pointers as Oregon's zone defense failed to rotate quick enough, the Cougars were up 19-6 in the first seven minutes.

Washington State didn't need much offense, though, as Oregon managed just 10 points in the first 12 minutes.

Things didn't get any better in the second half, although the Ducks did double their first-half point production in the first eight minutes.

Monson kept his starters on the bench for the first four minutes, and the lead stayed at around 20. But Lewis and Neil Derrick started hitting treys again, and things got even uglier in a hurry.

Oregon shot better in the second half but still finished at just 35 percent for the game, including a dismal two of 13 three-pointers.

The Cougars, though, heated up even more, hitting nearly 60 percent in the second half to finish at 57 percent for the game. The key statistic, though, was Washington State's three-point proficiency. Led by Lewis' six of eight, the Cougars hit 11 of 20 treys for the game.

"It was a tough game," said Oregon freshman Jeff Potter, who scored eight points. "They really made us get out of our offense. They're really quick, and they played well tonight."

Oregon will try to break its rapidly worsening skid Saturday night against Washington in a 7:35 game at McArthur Court.

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