

San Jose State skates past Ducks for victories

By Doug Carter
Emerald Contributor

Nobody likes home cooking of the humbling variety, but the Oregon club hockey team had to choke down two helpings of it this weekend.

San Jose State came to Eugene and force fed the Cold Ducks a pair of losses, 4-3 on Saturday and 6-1 on Sunday.

The weekend sweep gives the Spartans three wins against no losses to Oregon this year, leaving the home team disoriented and surprised by the way San Jose State skated around as if it owned Lane County Ice.

"They hit a lot harder than we expected — and a lot more," Duck head coach Shane Peters said of the team that racked up 117 penalty minutes in the two games.

Most of those minutes were awarded with 12:55 left in the second period and San Jose State leading 2-1. Following a whistle, Ducks Nevin Harper and Mike McHugh found opposing partners and racked up some extracurricular credits.

Harper was cross-checked in the back by Spartan wing Elliott Chung, who got help from Tony Destro to double-team the Duck defenseman. The ensuing retaliatory beating by Harper resulted in a game misconduct and a one-game suspension.

For his role in the melee, Chung, the Spartans' leading scorer, was also ejected and

forced to miss Sunday's action. Destro was finished for Saturday but was allowed to return for the second game.

The other participants in the brawl, McHugh and his sparring partner, each got five-minute penalties for fighting.

But the fisticuffs sparked the wrong team, as San Jose State scored the game's next two goals to build what proved to be an insurmountable margin. Spartan captain Martin Dennis had a hand in both, scoring one on a blast that found the lower left corner of the net and assisting on the other.

The Montreal native finished with three goals and three assists for the weekend, a performance worthy of recognition.

"It was satisfying," Dennis said. "We played real well in both games and had a lot of fun."

Spartan wing and team founder Steve Stich echoed Dennis' sentiments and was impressed with Oregon's facilities.

"We had a good time this weekend," Stich said. "This is the nicest rink we've played in all year — actually, the last two years."

And the series between these two teams has been very competitive over the last two years. Last year at home, Oregon scored the winning goal with six seconds left, and earlier this year at San Jose, the Spartans prevailed in sudden-death overtime.

But as of late, the Ducks have been forming some bad habits. Twice the team fell behind 4-1 this weekend, and captain Scott Brown sees room for improvement as far as being ready to play is concerned.

"We need to bring more intensity to the ice instead of trying to find it out there," Brown said. "We keep putting ourselves in a position to play catch up."

And it was Brown that brought some life back to the Duck bench on Saturday night with a dazzling goal that cut the lead to 4-2 with 54 seconds remaining in the second period.

Brown swiped the puck in the neutral zone, swooped in on the San Jose State net with a defender on his back and beat the goalie on his glove side. Brown fell to the ice with the shot and, along with the defender, smacked into Spartan goalie Clement Betpolice.

Betpolice left the game with strained ligaments and will be on the shelf for at least six weeks.

The injury and the fighting may have pumped the Spartans up, but Duck defenseman Mark Liebert pointed at the fact San Jose had some quality players that missed the earlier meeting with Oregon.

"They had a few new recruits that were just excellent," Liebert said. "We didn't play against their two big goal scorers, No. 5 (Joel Jenkins) and No. 64 (Dennis) down there."

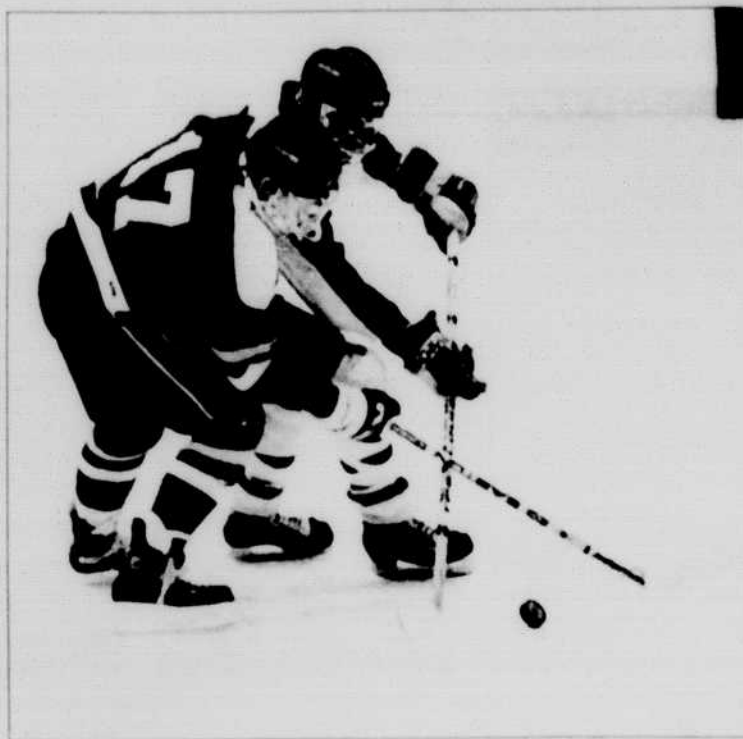


Photo by Sean Poston
Oregon's Damian Jorgensen battles a San Jose State player for possession of the puck. The Ducks lost 4-3 and 6-1 against the Spartans this weekend.

With the assistance of Dennis, Jenkins repeatedly tested Oregon goalies, scoring twice and helping his team outshoot the Ducks 38-31 on Saturday and 29-19 on Sunday.

Duck goalie John O'Donnell made 27 saves Saturday night, many of them remarkable, but he couldn't keep the Spartans off the board all by himself.

"They got to the puck first

and really moved it around us," O'Donnell said.

The two-game sweep drops the Ducks' record to 5-9 for the year, and San Jose State improved its season mark to 15-3.

A weary Oregon will enjoy a much needed three-week break before hosting Washington on Feb. 22 and 23. Brown said the team could use the time for recuperation.

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But Arizona State made 22 of 32 free throws compared to Oregon's 6 of 12 and had only 10 turnovers to the Ducks' 16.

Oregon didn't attempt a free throw in the first half, and only Reece and Stoudamire scored from the charity stripe.

More than anything, though, Oregon

suffered from a lack of experience and an inability to counter Arizona State's inside game, in particular Bennett, who had seven offensive rebounds and was too quick for Patterson and too big for Robinson and Jordan.

"Bennett really hurt us inside," Monson said. "We got killed on the boards."

"They had a difficult time handling Mario inside," Arizona State coach Bill Frieder said. "He could have used another

five minutes of rest during the game, but he was playing so well that I left him in."

Oregon also blew too many scoring chances with turnovers and didn't take advantage of the Sun Devils' 34-percent first-half shooting, mainly by giving up so many offensive rebounds.

"We made some freshman mistakes," Monson said. "It's just the experience factor."

Oregon came out Saturday apparently having forgotten the 51-point beating the Wildcats laid on them just two days before.

The Ducks scored the first four points and made four treys in the first eight minutes.

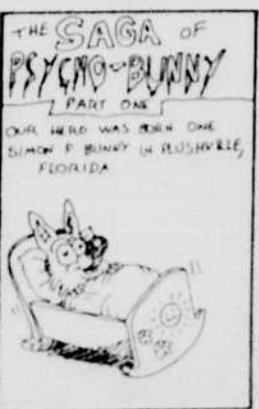
Oregon led 21-17 with six minutes left in the first half after Stoudamire hit a jumper from the top of the key with Fontana in his face.

Weasel's World



Kraig Norris

Oscar the Freshman



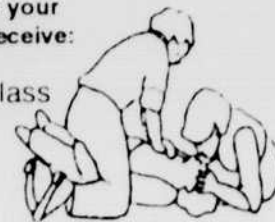
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