

Stoudamire ends Oregon career in style, heartbreak



From the Sidelines
Steve Mims

Antoine Stoudamire gave Oregon basketball fans something to remember him by Saturday night.

Stoudamire saved one of his best performances for last, leading the Ducks with 29 points, six rebounds and five assists in Oregon's 79-76 loss to California. Saturday night's game came just 24 hours after Stoudamire was left off the All-Pacific-10 Conference team, and the 6-foot-5 swingman was obviously upset about the snub.

"I thought I had to prove something tonight," Stoudamire said. "I think I should have been All-Pac-10, and I wanted to prove I deserved to be on the team."

Stoudamire clearly deserved to be an all-conference selection over such players as Oregon State's Scott Haskin, UCLA's Tyus Edney and Washington State's Bennie Seltzer. However, because Stoudamire's team went 3-15 in the conference, coaches overlooked his value to the team.

The snub did not affect Stoudamire's game because he has been through this before.

Stoudamire led the state by averaging 23 points and 14 rebounds during his senior year at Jesuit High School, but he was not named first-team all-state because his team did not advance to the state championship tournament. Stoudamire was not even named Metro League Player of the Year, finishing second to fellow Duck Aaron Johnson.

Stoudamire could have been excused if he did not play well against California, because the 24 hours leading up to the game were some of the most emotional hours of his life. Friday night, Stoudamire walked by a television and noticed he had been left off of the all-conference team, but that was nothing compared to the news he awoke to Saturday.

Last week, Damon Flagg, a friend Stoudamire lived with during the summer, was involved in a car accident and is currently in a coma in a Pendleton, Ore., hospital.

"Damon was like my younger brother," Stoudamire said. "I really wanted to play well tonight because I dedicated the game to him."

Antoine did play well and was unaffected by adversity, but that has been his trademark at Oregon.

During his year and a half as a Duck, Stoudamire has seen a coach move on, numerous players leave and others suspended.

But he remained constant throughout.

Despite the adversity, Stoudamire went out and played one of the best games of his career. Antoine scored the first six points of the game and had 12 points seven minutes into the game before finishing the first half with 15 points.

When Oregon made its last run of the game, Stoudamire scored seven points in the final seven minutes, and he almost sent the game into overtime, but a 30-foot shot at the buzzer was off the mark. It was the kind of shot that in a dream world would go in. It would have been the perfect way to end Stoudamire's great college career, but fairy tales don't always come true.

"It would have been the perfect ending if it would have gone in," Oregon guard Orlando Williams said. "He has had such a wonderful career and is a great leader."

Antoine's college career should not be over, but it is. Stoudamire played only a few games during his sophomore season at Georgetown before he transferred to Oregon, but the NCAA refused to grant him a medical redshirt for the season. Stoudamire has every right to be bitter toward the NCAA, but he isn't. In fact, he could appeal for another year of eligibility, but he won't do that either.

"I don't feel like hiring



Oregon forward Antoine Stoudamire battled adversity and California's defense in his final game as a Duck and came away with 29 points, six rebounds and five assists in the 79-76 loss Saturday.

lawyers and going through all it would take for an appeal," Stoudamire said. "I have no regrets about what happened in my college career."

It is questionable whether Stoudamire will be drafted by an NBA club in June or find a spot in the league next year, but if his game continues to improve like it has at Oregon, the league can't keep him out for long.

Stoudamire said he is only thinking about the NBA next season, but he wouldn't rule out

playing in the Continental Basketball Association or somewhere overseas if he does not make the NBA.

For now, Stoudamire leaves Oregon as the only player besides Terrell Brandon to score more than 1,000 points in two years. His college career was too short, but he is looking to make up lost time in the NBA.

Steve Mims is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

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