

Ducks tune up for Pac-10 with a win

By Steve Mims
Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon had fun Monday night, and they should have because it won't get any easier the rest of the season.

The Ducks got their third win in four games, beating Alaska Fairbanks 100-71 at McArthur Court. The Ducks were never really threatened by the Division II Nanooks from the north, and the only questions at the end of the game was whether Oregon would reach triple digits, and when Zach Sellers' bank shot insured this would happen, the crowd of 5,233 made its most noise of the night.

"It was a game that helps us in preparation and executing in game situations," said Oregon forward Jeff Potter, who scored 14 points and grabbed four rebounds. "It's something where we can get game experience get a win and get some confidence."

Oregon finished its non-conference schedule 4-5, but it will get much tougher when the Pacific-10 Conference schedule begins Thursday night at UCLA.

Oregon got ahead early and never faded, thanks mostly to good ballhandling. The Ducks went the first 14 minutes without a turnover and finished with only two total in the first half. Oregon had only seven turnovers for the game, compared to the Nanooks 24.

"One statistic that I really like is seven turnovers and 20 assists," Oregon head coach Jerry Green said. "There's been times when we've had two or three assists and 20 turnovers, so it's good to see those two

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MARK MCTYRE for the Emerald

Things got a lot easier for Oregon guard Kenya Wilkins after this hard foul, as he scored 17 points, dished out six assists and had four steals in Oregon's win.

Women run past Miners

By Scott Simonson
Oregon Daily Emerald

In the first half it was from outside. In the second half it was from inside.

Either way, Oregon's women's basketball team had enough offensive firepower and outgunned the University of Texas-El Paso 90-70 on Monday. The game was Oregon's final tuneup for the Pacific-10 Conference season, which begins at home on Thursday against UCLA.

Oregon never trailed in the contest but had a couple of tense moments after UTEP overcame a 12-point first-half deficit to tie the game at 50-50 with about 12 minutes left in the second half. However, the Ducks got 11 points in three minutes from forward Debbie Sporchich to spark a 15-0 run, and the Miners never recovered.

The Ducks bolted to a 10-2 lead to open the game and stayed in control for most of the first half, thanks to hot perimeter shooting by forward Jessica Schutt and guard Missy Croshaw.

Schutt and Croshaw combined for 21 of Oregon's 37 first-half points. When Schutt knocked down her third three-pointer of the half to make the

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Veterans lead Oregon to basketball victory

When winter break started, the Oregon men's basketball team was in trouble.

The team had just dropped a game against lowly Pacific and had yet to put together a strong performance in any of its games.

The Ducks were facing road games against Idaho and Wisconsin-Green Bay and a home game against Arizona- and California-destroying Santa Clara.

The players were losing confidence. In the past couple of seasons, sure the Ducks were bad, but at least they had a leader. But in early December, Oregon was beginning to look as if the new recruiting class consisted of 12 players rather than six.

The coach, the usually optimistic Jerry Green, began to question his ability to bring this program out of the dumper. The coach whose motto seemed to be "You can't fix this program overnight" was suddenly doubting whether Oregon basketball was worth the effort.



DAVE CHARBONNEAU

Things got worse for the Ducks. They lost to Idaho and Wisconsin-Green Bay. They also lost at home to Santa Clara.

Oregon took a long break after returning from the Midwest and resumed practice on Christmas Eve in preparation for the Far West Classic in Portland.

The tournament, two days after Christmas, looked like another unwelcomed opportunity for the 1-4 Ducks to drop a couple of more games, and in front of the important Portland alumni no less.

In the first game they faced the University of Portland, a team

who came into the tourney with an impressive 7-3 record and was, at least in Portland, the talk of the town.

Oregon, however, rose up and surprised Portland, with Jordy Lyden hitting a last-second shot to give the Ducks a three-point win. The Ducks lost the following night to Oregon State, but only by four and the players were far more optimistic about the rest of the season than they were when December started.

More importantly, players were starting to step up. Lyden, Damon Runyon and the healed Jeff Potter started to join Orlando Williams as playing the role of seasoned veterans on the squad. Point guard Kenya Wilkins showed he could score points, knocking down 23 against Portland.

The night before New Year's Eve, the Ducks played their best and most important game of the year thus far, breaking a 27-game road losing streak to Division I

teams with a win at St. Mary's. Williams exploded for 33 points and the Ducks and Runyon didn't miss a shot.

The 3-5 Ducks face eighth-ranked UCLA Thursday in Los Angeles and the most surprising aspect of the season so far is that Green's highly touted rookies are finding themselves on the bench more and more, with the exception of Wilkins. Williams, Lyden, Runyon, Aaron Johnson and Jeff Potter are the ones carrying this team, the same guys who have been here for the past two or three years, the same guys who've gone 16-41 the past two seasons.

The Ducks are not yet a Pacific-10 Conference caliber team. Maybe they will be by next season. Maybe they will hit their stride by mid-season this year. The point is that Oregon managed to get through the holidays and is much better off now than it was a month ago.

Dave Charbonneau is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

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