

Memories of nights spent at Mac Court

It's basketball season in Eugene. That's not excitement you feel in the air, that's global warming.

The few faithful who still admit to bleeding green and gold again will trudge into McArthur Court on Thursdays and Saturdays. They swallow hard and steal themselves against eventual disappointment and once in a while get to walk out feeling relieved or even a little exuberant.

The rest watch and shake their heads. On nearly any night of the week, basketball devotees can find better games on their television sets. And they do.

CBS, ESPN and PSN can take you to Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor or to Cameron Indoor Stadium in Durham or to Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence. Mac Court, for all its charms, can't compete.

But try something. How many televised college basketball games can you remember from recent years? Not many. How many regular-season games? Precious few.

There are memories, of course. The game where an adolescent giant in knee pads named O'Neal practiced his dance moves on the court against Arizona while playing with what looked like Nerf hoops.

And the game where a *Melrose Place* extra named Laettner



SCOTT SIMONSON

missed a free throw and got hit in the chest by a pass from some cocky freshman from Michigan who was so anxious for Laettner to miss again that he didn't bother to hand the ball back to the referee. And the game where a skinny kid named Hardaway played BYU in an undersized gym in Hawaii that could barely contain his vast talents.

But few memories are made on television. I've watched Chris Webber play countless times. When I think of Webber, I think of last spring at the NCAA regional in Tucson, Ariz., against UCLA. It was the only time I've seen him play in person.

I saw an unrelenting stare in warmups. I saw emotion and intensity each trip down the court in the second half. I saw a big man with imagination and touch. I saw a player who, when he caught the ball on the low block and moved toward the basket, nobody from UCLA or in the state of Arizona or in the rest of

college basketball could stop him from dunking.

I didn't see all of that on television. It's the difference between watching it and being there. It's not having to see only in camera angles or think based on what the color commentator tells you.

It's the difference between a play and a movie, between a phone call and meeting face-to-face, between watching home movies of your childhood and growing up.

Now try and remember games in Mac Court in recent years. They're too many to count.

There are the games Oregon played. The upset against Arizona in 1991, with both the crowd and the players sensing from the opening basket that history could repeat itself. The blowout win over Oregon State the same year, with a diminutive walk-on named Brett Johnson scoring in the waning seconds of the game, then being hoisted onto the shoulders of teammates and carried back into obscurity. Or Cal last year, with Oregon losing but playing like a team of the future, coming within a basket of beating a team that would beat Duke less than a month later.

There are the players of recent years. Tracy Murray humiliating Oregon's zone defense by making three pointers look like lay-

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ups. Harold Miner, his game both preternaturally smooth and disarmingly idiosyncratic, bringing his array of photogenic drives, dunks and jumpers. Oregon's own Terrell Brandon dueling with Robert Pack. (Honorable mentions go to Khalid Reeves, Lorenzo Orr, Vin Baker, Harold Miner in warmups and during timeouts, and Harold Miner boarding the team bus.)

It's difficult to predict what you might see if you bother to go to Mac Court this year. You'll probably want to forget most of what you see. But there will be something, someone worth remembering. That may be more than can be said for sitting at home.

Scott Simonson is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

Women set for Civil War in Corvallis

By Scott Simonson
Oregon Daily Emerald

When the Oregon women's basketball team plays Oregon State in Corvallis at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, all won't be according to form.

The Ducks, 1-1 in the Pacific-10 Conference and 7-4 overall, are one of the conference's biggest surprises so far. Oregon was 3-15 in the Pac-10 last season, but beat UCLA and nearly upset No. 9 USC last weekend.

On the other hand, Oregon State, 0-2 in the Pac-10 and 8-3 overall, was supposed to finish in the top half of the conference and was ranked as high as 26th in the country before being swept at home by the Bruins and Trojans.

Oregon head coach Jody Runge expects the Beavers to be hungry for their first conference win when they take the court Thursday. As a result, she said, the Beavers may try anything to get on the right track.

"They need a win. They're going to do whatever crazy thing... They may have a

Turn to **WOMEN**, Page 12

Oregon Daily Emerald

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