

Tougher games await Ducks in Arizona

By Dave Charbonneau
Oregon Daily Emerald

For the past two weeks, the Oregon men's basketball team has had a break, so to speak.

The Ducks are coming off back-to-back weekends that saw them face two of the predicted three worse teams in the Pacific-10 Conference — Oregon State and Washington. In addition, Oregon had the luxury of playing those games at home.

The results were two wins, one loss (to Washington State) and an overall feeling of "OK, we know we can at least compete in this conference," among the Oregon players and coaches. In round one of the Cellar Dweller Showdown between the Ducks, Beavers and Huskies, Oregon emerged the winner.

Tonight, the Ducks (2-3 in the Pac-10, 6-8 overall) return to reality, or at least a more true reality of what awaits them the rest of the season in the tough Pac-10 when they face Arizona in the dreaded McKale Center in Tucson.

The last time Oregon defeated Arizona was three years ago when the Ducks managed a four-point victory at McArthur Court. Since that game, the Wildcats have won five straight by an

average 40 points a game.

The Wildcats sit in a tie for second place in the conference with three other teams and have gotten off to less-than-amazing starts. Arizona fell on its face in its first shots at UCLA and California, the two other teams expected to have a crack at taking the Pac-10 title.

Even more disheartening for the Wildcats is that they lost to the Golden Bears in Tucson, something that Oregon head coach Jerry Green knows doesn't happen that often.

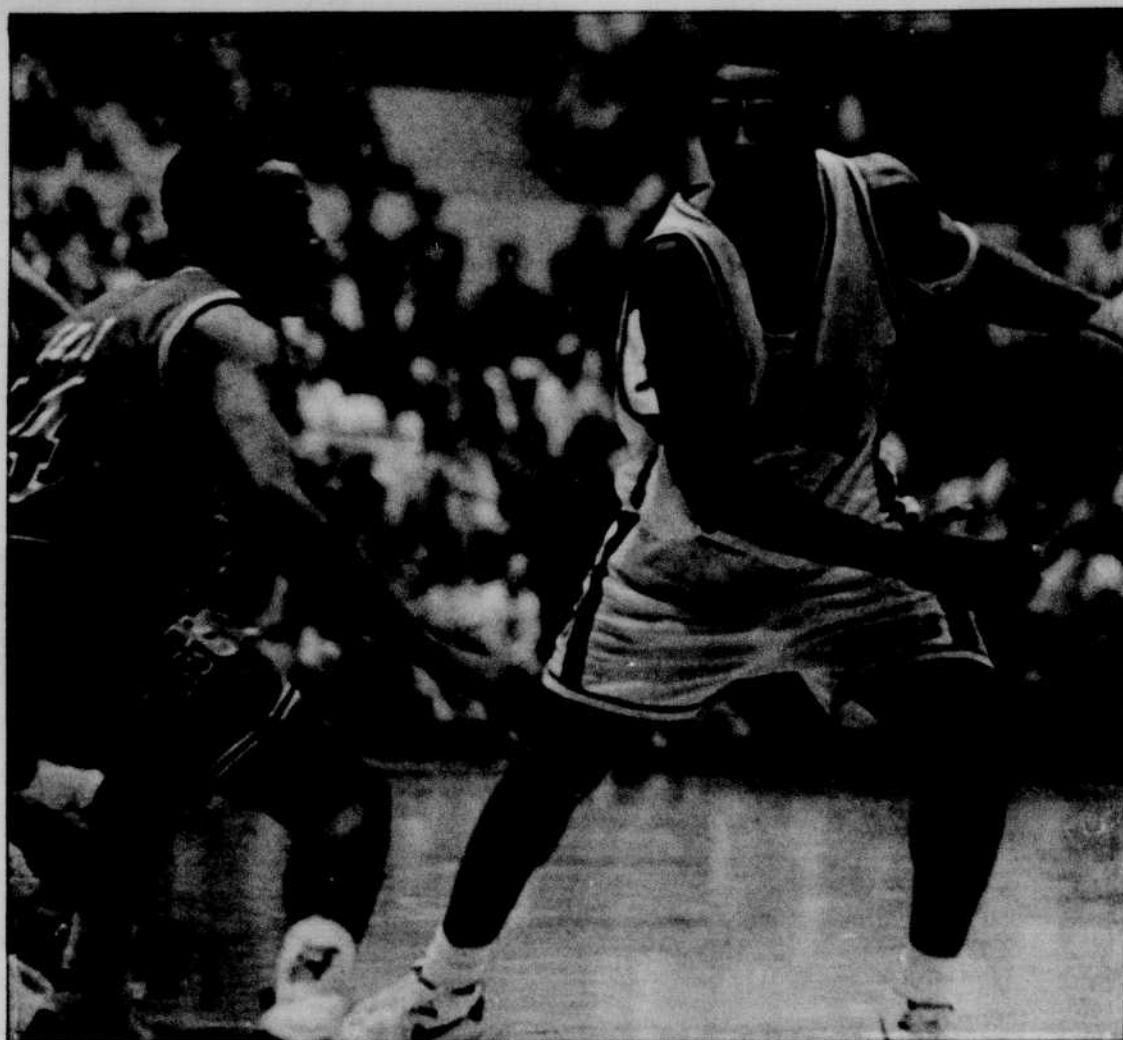
"We have to play good and sound enough to put ourselves in a position to win in the final seven minutes," Green said. "And that's difficult, especially in the McKale Center."

Oregon opened Pac-10 play against No. 1 UCLA and would have had a shot at the end if it didn't take them the first 10 minutes of the game to get the engine started.

Green said a 10 minute dry spell tonight will mean certain death for the Ducks.

"We need to play well from start to finish," he said. "Arizona is different from UCLA. They come after you a lot more, where as UCLA sits back and

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Oregon guard Orlando Williams and Reggie Geary of Arizona will renew acquaintances tonight in Tucson.

Duck women host Arizona foes

By Scott Simonson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon women's basketball coach Jody Runge said it. She said the "T" word.

Tournament.

"The thing for us right now is that we're back on track for the goals we set at the beginning of the season," Runge said. "We have an opportunity to play well through the remainder of the Pac-10 season and get an opportunity to go to the tournament."

Oregon, 3-2 in the Pacific-10 Conference and 9-5 overall, hasn't had a winning record in league play since the 1988-89 season and went 3-15 in the conference last year, but as the Ducks prepare to play Arizona on Thursday and Arizona State on Saturday, anything seems possible.

Last weekend, Oregon beat both Washington schools on the road for the first time in 10 years. It upset No. 16 Washington 70-67. After losing by

two to nationally ranked USC at home then being pounded by Oregon State on the road, the Ducks return to town on a roll.

"We're just going to take it one game at a time," Runge said. "The kids feel good right now but they're not overconfident. I think Oregon State was a good reality check for us. On any given night, there are things that can be out of our control and we have to be ready to play."

Oregon forward Debbie Sporcich was named the Pac-10's Player of the Week after making game-winning free throws against both the Huskies and the Cougars. While most players see their numbers drop off once they begin to face tougher opponents in conference play, Sporcich has posted better averages in points and rebounds (19.2 and 11.6) than she did in the preseason (17.8 and 10.1).

Against Washington, Oregon changed its starting

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MARK MCTYRE/For the Emerald

Oregon guard Karen Healea will remain in the starting lineup when the Ducks face Arizona tonight.

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