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# OREGON HOOPS

## Potter finds peace at the line

By Dave Charbonneau  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Ask Jeff Potter about how his latest injury is healing up, and his response is, "Which one?"

Potter, Oregon's 6-foot-9 junior forward, has taken his lumps this season.

Strained ligaments in his elbow kept him out of the Duck lineup for two games at the beginning of the season. Last weekend, he turned an ankle at Arizona and sprained his knee against Arizona State. After a win at home against Washington, Potter came into the interview room with a deep gash on his forehead.

"I'm going to look like Scarface by the end of the season," he said.

As the Ducks' power forward, Potter has done his share of banging inside. The result has been a number of bumps and bruises.

But Potter has discovered a place on the court that is safe for him, a place where he can rest his battered bones and help the team at the same time.

That place is the free-throw line.

Potter has become virtually automatic at the line for the Ducks this season. He's hit 80 percent of his free throws — sixth in the Pacific-10 Conference — and has hit 92 percent of his shots in conference play.

Those numbers are even more incredible when considering he shot 46 percent from the line his freshman year.

Potter, who shot 75 percent from the line in high school, said he struggled because the coaches wanted him to shoot like, of all people, Don MacLean of UCLA.

"When I got here, the coaches didn't like my style of shooting," he said. "They wanted me to shoot like Don MacLean. They gave me the run-around and I just never got any confidence."

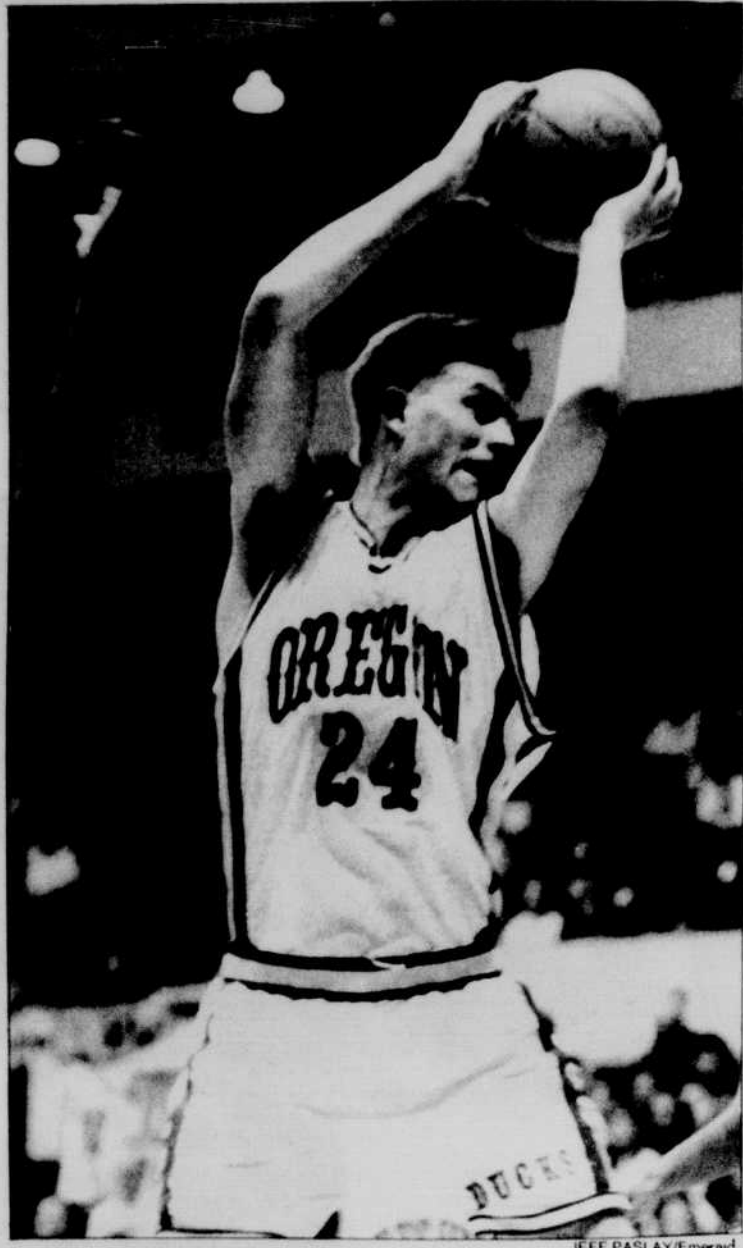
After that season, Potter went back to his old style and hit 75 percent last season. This season, Potter has missed only two of 27 tosses in conference play.

"Lately, I've had good rhythm at the line," Potter said. "I expect every shot to go in. I don't even remember the last time I missed one."

The free throw line is not the only place in which Potter has helped the Ducks this season. In Pac-10 games he's averaging 13 points and 5.3 rebounds a game, second on the team in both categories.

"Jeff really improved over the summer," Oregon head coach Jerry Green said. "He's scoring and rebounding better, but the thing I really like about Jeff is that he's one of the few players I've ever coached who comes to work every day."

Throughout Potter's career at Oregon, he's always been a fan favorite, thanks to his tough work ethic. In his two-and-a-half seasons with the Ducks, Potter's been stuck with defen-



Oregon forward Jeff Potter has become a fan favorite because of his hard work and improvement, particularly at the free throw line.

sive assignments like guarding NBA prospects Chris Mills, MacLean and Adam Keefe, to name a few.

"One thing I'm really proud of is that none of those guys came in and really went off on me," he said.

As strange as it may sound, Potter considers himself lucky to still be a Duck. He thought he was on thin ice two years ago when the Ducks fired coach Don Monson and hired Green.

"I lived in Seattle when Lynn Nance took over at Washington and cleaned house," Potter said. "When the new coaches came in, I didn't know what they were going to do with me. I didn't even know what I wanted to do at that point."

While many players from the Monson years disappeared one by one from Green's program, Potter became a stable and reliable force, starting every game last season and averaging nearly 10 points and four rebounds in his sophomore season.

Potter and Green have an obviously mutual admiration for each other, and with regard to that, Potter believes he lucked out.

"Coach Green is a great coach and a great guy," he said. "I just feel really lucky he didn't ship (Monson's team) all out, because to take over a 6-21 team, he could have easily done that."

Although Green's run-and-gun style of play doesn't exactly cater to Potter's style of play, Potter said it is Green's attitude that he really likes.

"His attitude is 'We're going to get this done,'" Potter said. "At first I had my doubts about whether (turning the program around) was possible, but lately, we've been playing competitively and I really think things are going to turn around for us."

The question is: How long will it take before the Oregon program cracks the upper echelon of the Pac-10?

Chances are it will likely happen after Potter — who only has one year left after this one — is gone.

"That's kind of a bum thing," Potter said. "But hopefully players like myself, Aaron (Johnson), Orlando (Williams), Jordy (Lyden), Jon Mitchell and Damon Runyon — the 'Old Guys' — will be looked at as the guys who helped bring it back, not the guys who went 6-21."

### Men's Basketball Schedule

FEB 3	Thursday	STANFORD	McArthur Court (7:05 p.m.)
5	Saturday	CALIFORNIA	McArthur Court (3:05 p.m.) (RAYCOM)
12	Saturday	OSU	Corvallis, Ore. (1:05 p.m.) (RAYCOM)
17	Thursday	Washington	Seattle, Wash. (7:00 p.m.)
19	Saturday	Washington State	Pullman, Wash. (3:00 p.m.)
MAR 24	Thursday	ARIZONA STATE	McArthur Court (7:05 p.m.)
26	Saturday	ARIZONA	McArthur Court (1:05 p.m.) (RAYCOM)
MAR 3	Thursday	California	Berkeley, Calif. (7:30 p.m.)
5	Saturday	Stanford	Palo Alto, Calif. (7:30 p.m.)
10	Thursday	USC	McArthur Court (7:05 p.m.)
12	Saturday	UCLA	McArthur Court (3:05 p.m.) (RAYCOM)