

Green's Ducks hit critical point

The Jerry Green era at Oregon begins its first crucial stretch this weekend when the Ducks travel north to face Washington and Washington State.

As the Ducks drag their 2-8 record and eighth-place standing in the Pacific-10 Conference with them this weekend, they are desperately in need of some wins. Oregon spent the first half of the Pac-10 playing well against some good teams, but were only able to beat Washington and Oregon State, the only two teams with the same amount of wins as the Ducks.

Oregon played well in stretches during the first half of the season against good teams, but was never able to put together a consistent 40 minutes. The Ducks played well on the road against national powers Arizona and UCLA, but went quiet for a stretch of the first half and were not able to overcome the deficit.

Oregon also played competitively at USC and Arizona State, but was not able to get wins. At home, Oregon stayed close to Washington State and California before getting burned by superhuman efforts from Tony Harris and Jason Kidd, respectively. The Ducks turned 180 degrees against Stanford, falling behind early before coming just short of a comeback.

The only tangible things the Ducks gained from these games were two wins and eight losses. For a program that has combined for five wins over the last two years, victories are a much-needed commodity. Playing competitively can only do so much before a team must have something to show for the competitiveness: wins.

If Oregon can't scrap at least three or four wins out of the final eight games, the 1993-94 season will once again go down as a failure. This would be a shame for a season that started



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so bright with two wins in five games. However, the current five-game losing streak has made those memories distant.

This week is crucial, because it seems this Duck squad becomes more and more frustrated as the losses pile up. Internal and academic strifes have begun to rip away at this squad, as the suspensions of Brion Smith and Zach Sellers in recent weeks cost the Ducks depth at point guard and strength inside.

Jon Mitchell struggled to move the ball when given the chance against Stanford, California and Oregon State, and while Smith hasn't shown he can do much better, I can't help but wonder if another option would have helped the Ducks in those losses. Also, if the 6-9, 230 lb. Sellers was in the lineup last Saturday, does OSU's 6-foot-9, 192 lb. Jerohn Brown grab 18 rebounds?

The loss at OSU caused more frustration, shown in the gestures two Oregon players aimed at the Beaver fans. This could be expected from Jeff Potter or Orlando Williams, players who've had to suffer through the numerous losses the past two years, but so far all tangible signs of frustration have come from first-year players.

Another thing to start thinking about is the future of this program. If the Ducks don't get a couple of wins to boost their confidence this season, will it hurt their confidence entering into next year? Remember, the

Ducks add only freshman Mike Carson and sophomore Jamal Lawrence to the lineup currently intact. Thus, any momentum Oregon can gain this year could carry over into next year.

Green desperately needs a good season next year to keep interest in the program, because with eight scholarships available in 1995, the Ducks will once again be in the process of ingraining most of the team into a new system, a scenario that rarely results in wins. Sound familiar?

With a road trip to the Bay Area and visits to Mac Court coming from UCLA and Arizona, this weekend presents the Ducks with two of their better chances to gain victories. Thursday's opponent, Washington, is in last place in the conference, and beatable, despite its current hot streak, while Washington State is beat up and will be without suspended point guard Dominic Ellison and possibly injured forward Mark Hendrickson.

Last year when Green inherited the program and its players, wins were not expected and thus the season was not considered as much of a disappointment. However, with a lively cast of six newcomers this year, a little more hope was put on the program, hope that was fueled by a 2-3 conference start. Oregon's challenge the rest of the year is to renew that hope with something more than close games. The Ducks must start putting to use some of the lessons they have learned from the close games they've been in, and become the team that makes a late run or hits the game-winning shot. Whatever it takes, Oregon must begin to win immediately.

Steve Mims is the Sports Editor of the Emerald.

Ducks, Huskies looking for third conference win

By Dave Charbonneau
Oregon Daily Emerald

No, Nirvana, Mudhoney and Soundgarden won't be playing, but Oregon's game tonight against Washington could get just as grungy when the two last-place teams in the Pacific-10 Conference meet in Seattle.

Oregon (2-8 in the Pac-10, 6-13 overall) will be trying to end a five-game losing streak and a 28-game road losing streak in the Pac-10. The Ducks are coming off their toughest defeat of the season Saturday in Corvallis when they lost to Oregon State, 101-91, in double overtime.

Although Washington's record (2-9, 4-16) is worse than Oregon's, the Huskies have shown signs of life in the past couple weeks.

Two weeks ago, Washington broke a nine-game losing streak with a win over Arizona in Seattle, 74-69. The following week, the Huskies gave UCLA a scare, losing 79-76, and then defeated USC on its home court 50-49 on Saturday.

Washington's performance against UCLA prompted Bruin coach Jim Harrick to give the Huskies some praise.

"Washington has learned how to score," he said. "They have renewed enthusiasm and are playing well now. They gave us all we wanted and beat USC - that's a good win. They have three seniors, and Bender's got them playing well right now."

First-year coach Bob Bender said he is pleased with his team's improvement.

"We've experienced a little more success over the past couple of weeks," he said.

"When you're having a season like this one, sometimes your players have a tendency to write the season off. This team hasn't done that. They come to practice every day and work hard to improve."

Oregon head coach Jerry Green said he's equally impressed with the job Bender's done with his team. After all, Green went through the same thing last year.

"Washington is much improved," Green said. "Bob Bender is doing a great job. They've gotten their strategy down as far as what they want to do. They are controlling the tempo, taking good shots and making you work hard offensively to get a good shot."

For the Ducks, good shots have been hard to come by, or at least making shots has been. The Ducks have failed to shoot more than 40 percent for five straight games, and their season percentage is barely above 40 percent.

Orlando Williams scored 30 points on Saturday and is currently sixth in the conference in scoring with a 17.2 average. Forward Jeff Potter is the only other Duck averaging in double figures, with 11.2 a game.

The Huskies are led by center Maurice Woods, who is averaging 11.5 points a game and five rebounds. Guard Amir Rashad is also averaging just more than 11 a game and leads the team in rebounds with 7.1 a game.

Oregon will face Washington State Saturday in Pullman.

The Ducks' next home game will be next Thursday against Arizona State.

WSU suspends point guard for the weekend

PULLMAN, Wash. (AP) — Washington State freshman point guard Dominic Ellison has been suspended for two games for cutting classes, coach Kelvin Sampson said Wednesday.

"This is something I feel very strongly about and something we can't allow to go on," said Sampson, who suspended Ellison for home games against Oregon State on Thursday and Oregon on Saturday.

"There is a time in these young men's lives when they have to learn that academics is the reason why they're here. Even though basketball is important, academics has got to become more important to them."

The 6-foot guard from Inglewood, Calif., has started 14 of 15 games this season, averaging 7.9 points and 3.9 assists. Washington State is 15-8 overall and 5-6 in the Pacific-10 Conference.

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