

Brooks keeps Ducks in position to win

Remember way back when. It was the Portland State game. The Oregon Ducks thoroughly crushed the underdog Vikings as expected, and the season was lazily set into motion for what looked to be another dismal affair for the hapless Ducks.

When Oregon head coach Rich Brooks sat down after the game at the interview table in a room filled with reporters, the first question thrown his way was, "Do you think you saved your job today?" Brooks sneered back and sarcastically responded in the positive.

So after six wins, including



CHRIS METZ

two-straight over teams that Oregon simply wasn't supposed to beat in this season filled with supposed inexperience and below-average coaching, the question seems kind of ridiculous. Even in the games the

Ducks have lost, Brooks and his coaching staff put the team in a position to win. But bad breaks and sloppy, uninspired play resulted in an embarrassing loss to Hawaii and, a week later, to Utah.

But when it has mattered most this season, one that saw Brooks step down as athletic director so as not to deny his team his full attention, Brooks has proved his worth. Maybe he is not the coach of the future for Oregon. But he is, at least for now, a coach for the present who is the right man to be guiding this young group.

This season has seen starting

quarterback Danny O'Neil go down with an injury. And with an offensive line that resembles a hospital ward more than anything else, it's pretty darn impressive that the Ducks are where they are going into this weekend's final home game with the Arizona State Sun Devils.

"These guys are just amazing," Brooks said of his team. "We're kind of patchworking it together out there, but we're finding a way to win football games."

Against USC it was a strong running game that saw the Ducks

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Sun Devils next up for No. 21 Oregon

Chris Metz

Oregon Daily Emerald

Despite a variety of setbacks that Oregon head coach Rich Brooks has had in his time as the leader of the Ducks, he is by no means looking back as the Ducks prepare for the Arizona State Sun Devils.

"We've been reminded of enough negative things this year," Brooks said. "We don't need to deal in negatives."

Oregon moved up to No. 21 in the nation in this week's Associated Press poll and takes

on a team that, while not being nationally ranked, is coming off of an impressive thumping of the BYU Cougars. Sun Devil quarterback Jake Plummer made his first-ever collegiate start against the Ducks in last year's 45-36 shootout that saw the Ducks hang on to an early 31-7 lead. In last week's win at Provo, Utah, Plummer shredded the BYU defense for a career-high 327 yards and

was named the Pac-10 offensive player of the week for his efforts.

"He presents more problems than anybody we've faced," Brooks said of the sophomore quarterback.

"They did anything they wanted to against BYU," Brooks added. "We have made the team very aware of that win. I know how difficult it is to play in Provo."

The last time Oregon was ranked in the top 25 by the Associated Press was in 1990. The national attention caps off a three-game home winning streak and has put Oregon football



MICHAEL SHINDLER/Emerald

The Ducks have braved the inclement weather this week, preparing for Arizona State as each game brings with it more pressure than the last.

back on the map.

"I don't have any feel for where this team should be ranked," Brooks said. "I'm hopeful that we can maintain some of the notoriety that we've gained this past week."

Not an easy task considering that Arizona State owns 10 of the 14 victories earned in the series between the two teams, including a 5-2 record at Autzen Stadium. Oregon, how-

ever, has won the last two meetings at Eugene and has won four of the last five contests with the Sun Devils.

"This is a very good Arizona State team," Brooks said. "We just don't have an easy game in my mind."

So far this season, the Ducks haven't put

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Midwest there for the taking for champions

Don Smith

For the Oregon Daily Emerald

1. Houston Rockets. There is really no reason to believe that the Rockets won't repeat as champions of the Midwest this season, as they bring back basically the entire squad that won it last year. Center Hakeem Olajuwon is one of the top three players in the league, but is unlikely to win the league MVP honors this time around. Sam Cassel, the second-year player who shined in the playoffs last season, should move in as the starting point guard this campaign, allowing Kenny Smith to provide offense off the bench. If Otis Thorpe remains strong and

Robert Horry continues to develop, look for the Rockets to last late into the postseason this year. **Key to the season:** Olajuwon, who is not a youngster by any means, must continue to play at last season's level and remain injury-free for Houston to have any championship aspirations.

2. San Antonio Spurs. This team will fight the Rockets for the top spot in the Midwest, as they should return strong this season. The squad features last season's scoring champion center David Robinson, as well as rebound titlist Dennis Rodman. In addition, the Spurs reacquired point guard Avery Johnson and forward Sean Elliott last

summer, after they left or were traded the previous season. Chuck Person also came during the off season and will provide substantial offense to replace the departed Dale Ellis. With all these options, the Spurs should cause headaches for their opponents this year. **Key to the season:** Dennis Rodman was a major problem for Spurs' management last season. If he improves his behavior and cuts down on the technical fouls, he could help San Antonio reach the Western Conference finals.

3. Utah Jazz. Karl Malone and John Stockton are still the guys for the Jazz, and if they continue to perform at their expected levels, Utah will have a winning

NBA PREVIEW



This is the second in a four-part preview of the 1994-95 NBA season.

TUESDAY: Atlantic Division

WEDNESDAY: Central Division

TODAY: Midwest Division

FRIDAY: Pacific Division

season. The addition of guard Jeff Hornacek last season helps the Jazz tremendously as he brings scoring, rebounds, assists

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THURSDAY

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Sports Shorts

DUCK RESULTS

VOLLEYBALL

Oregon St. d Oregon 3-0 (15-13, 15-3, 15-6)

SPORTS NEWS

Kingdome reopens; crews still at work

SEATTLE (AP) — The Kingdome is finally reopening, three months after acoustical tiles slammed into the stands and forced \$32.5 million in repairs to the stadium roof and ceiling.

Work on the Kingdome's roof is still being completed, but the 18-year-old stadium is waterproof now.

Crews on the roof are working under tents in Seattle's rainy November weather. The job originally was scheduled to be finished by Dec. 31, but interim Kingdome director Dick Sandaas said that deadline could be extended past if relaxing the pace would save money.

"We're not going to scrimp on the roof," he said. "That's happened in the past and we can't do that now."

NFL expansion teams temporarily find home

ROSEMONT, Ill. (AP) — By the time two days of NFL meetings ended Wednesday, Carolina was in the NFC West for next season fellow expansion franchise Jacksonville was in the AFC Central and San Francisco was chosen over Miami in competition for the 1999 Super Bowl.

When realignment didn't gain 21 of 28 "yes" votes, NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue simply had to slot the expansion teams into the divisions that currently have four teams, thereby creating six five-team groups.

"We will get a vote," he said, "or have the longest meeting in the history of the league."

Bagwell garners player of the year

(AP) — Jeff Bagwell, who cracked most of Houston's hitting marks before a broken hand stopped him, was honored Wednesday as major league player of the year by The Associated Press.

Bagwell, recently chosen as only the third unanimous MVP in NL history, batted .368 with 39 home runs and a major league-leading 116 RBIs.