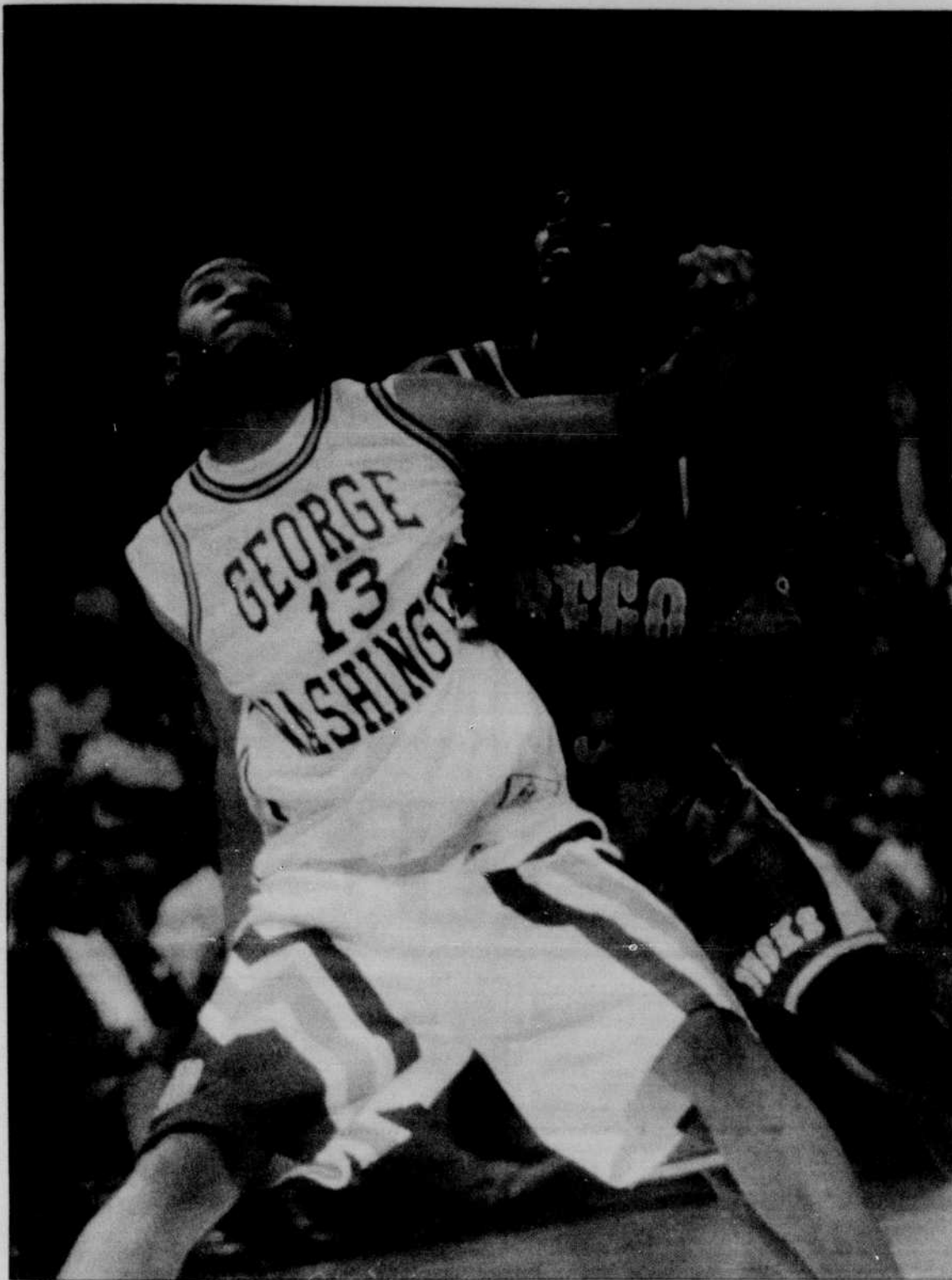




GARY GRASS/EMERALD

Oregon center Zach Sellers eyes the basket on the way to a Duck victory at the Far West Classic last week.

Ducks fly to impressive start in non-conference action

Kris Henry
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon men's basketball team jumped out to its most successful start in 18 years during the winter break.

When the fall term ended the Ducks were off to a good start with wins over Wisconsin-Green Bay, Seattle Pacific and Idaho.

As the winter term begins, Oregon sits and waits for UCLA with an 8-1 overall record.

On Dec. 13, the Ducks took to the road for the first time to face a Santa Clara team that had come into McArthur Court the previous year and beat Oregon, 75-67.

The Broncos jumped out to a 17-point lead by halftime, behind Duck-killer Steve Nash and a near flawless shooting performance from the entire Santa Clara team in the opening 10 minutes.

Nash would end the game with 34 points on a 10-15 shooting performance and would be helped by Brendan Graves, a 6-foot-10 bruiser who scored 11 points and grabbed 10 rebounds.

Oregon made a valiant last-ditch effort behind the shooting of Orlando Williams and the interior play of Zach Sellers and Aaron Johnson, but it was too late as the Broncos held on to an 88-

83 victory.

On Dec. 17, Oregon returned home to face Saint Mary's, a member of the West Coast Conference, at Mac Court.

Looking to rebound from an unimpressive performance versus Santa Clara, Oregon did exactly that.

Jeff Potter and Johnson led the Ducks against the Gaels, with 6 and 11 rebounds, respectively, to go along with 15 points each as Oregon coasted to a 74-64 win in front of a crowd of 5,684.

The Ducks were back in action two nights later against Seattle, a seldom seen Division II team that hadn't faced Oregon since 1976.

Oregon raced to a sizable lead before Kenya Wilkins was forced to leave the game after only eight minutes of play with a sprained ankle.

The Chieftains took advantage of a stunned Oregon team and pulled within range of the Ducks before finally being overcome, 97-84. Playing with nothing to lose, Seattle gave Oregon much more of a game than it anticipated or hoped for.

Williams led the team offensively with his 23 points and Johnson chipped in 17 over the smaller Chieftains. Zach Sellers pulled down eight boards to lead

the team in rebounding.

Oregon entered the Far West Classic with the dubious streak of not earning a title after being in the championship game in three of the last four tournaments.

The Ducks played George Washington for the first time in the history of the two schools in their opening contest on Dec. 27.

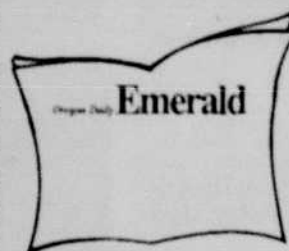
Williams dropped in 24 points while Henry Madden and Sellers came off the bench to provide an immediate spark, scoring 11 and nine points, respectively. The two sparkplugs also dominated defensively, combining for 14 rebounds and three primetime blocked shots.

With the score tied and no time left on the clock, Colonials' center Alexander Koul stepped to the free throw line to keep the Ducks from another championship game. But the 7-foot-1 sophomore bricked two straight shots and sent the game into overtime.

Oregon used pressure defense and outscored George Washington 14 to 9 in the extra period to outlast the Colonials, 77-72.

The Ducks took their place in the title game of the Far West Classic for the 15th time and sought their first title since 1974

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