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Ducks seek better record on road trip

Kris Henry
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon men's basketball team has taken to the road and will try to regroup against Stanford tonight in a battle between two nationally ranked squads.

The 22nd-ranked Ducks, 12-4 overall and 4-3 in league play, have lost three of their last four conference games and are searching to regain the composure that boosted them to Oregon's best start in 20 years.

That task will be a formidable one against a Cardinal team (13-3, 4-3) that is ranked No. 17 in the nation and narrowly missed upsetting UCLA at Pauley Pavilion last week.

The match between Oregon and Stanford can be seen live tonight on Prime Sports Northwest (TCI cable channel 23) at 8:35.

"Every game is a huge game for us," Oregon head coach Jerry Green said, "simply because we hold our destiny in our own hands. We need to win since there is no post-season tournament [in the Pac-10]."

"We can't end up in sixth place in the Pac-10 and expect to go to the NCAA tournament."

Heading into tonight's action, Oregon is tied for fourth in the competitive Pac-10 Conference with Stanford and Arizona State. The three teams trail UCLA, Arizona and Washington State, who all top the conference with two league losses.

Tonight's meeting is pivotal because the Ducks can ill afford many more debits on their record if they truly want to be involved in the NCAA tournament in March. Rarely has the conference had five teams selected for the tournament and since Oregon doesn't have a tradition in the tournament, wins are a premium for the remainder of the season.

Stanford head coach Mike Montgomery agrees with Green's notion that all the remaining games in the Pac-10 are pivotal for his team as well.

"These are all big games for us," Montgomery said. "We came within a game of qualifying [for the NCAA's] last year, and this team is definitely better. I'll be really disappointed if we don't make it."

Oregon trails the rivalry with Stanford, 62-37, and has had its difficulty in playing Stanford down on The Farm. The contest pits two of the conference's premier point guards in

Oregon's Kenya Wilkins and Stanford's Brevin Knight as the two sophomores face off for the third time.

"[Stanford] plays very composed and don't beat themselves," Green said. "They are very physical and have a balanced attack. I think Brevin Knight and Tim Young certainly have a chance to make it in the NBA, so they are major concerns."

The Cardinal relies on the efforts of Knight, who scores 15.5 points and dishes out nearly six assists per game, and Dion Cross (18.8 points per game) on the offensive end. Playing in his first year, Young also adds 11 points and nearly eight rebounds per game.

Stanford has played better away from home (3-2) than in Maples Pavilion (1-1) in conference play this year while Oregon is 2-1 on the road so far in Pac-10 play.

The Cardinal's successful season can be attributed to its being second in the Pac-10 in three crucial categories — rebounding, opponent's field goal percentage and opponent's points per game. Stanford also leads the league in free throw percentage, knocking the charity shots down at a .754 clip.

Women's team anxious to jump back on winning track

Mark McTyre
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon women's basketball team is currently riding a two-game skid and is looking to jump back on the winning track, as the third-ranked Stanford Cardinal comes to Mac Court tonight.

A pair of momentary lapses toward the end of the first half proved to be fatal for the Ducks during their trip to the Arizona schools, where they lost to both teams by a combined six points.

Oregon was held scoreless for the final 4:44 of the first half while Arizona put together a 13-point run in its four-point victory. Arizona State helped alleviate a 17-4 deficit with an 11-4 run in the last four minutes of the

first half, pacing its two-point margin.

"Obviously it was a major disappointment," Oregon head coach Jody Runge said. "We missed our opportunity to move into a position of being the team to beat, next to Stanford. We didn't play well defensively."

While the defense had its problems, the offense sustained major damage after returning home. The Australian connection, Renae Fegent and Sally Crowe — who extended their double-figure outputs to eight and 10 games during the road trip, respectively — fell prey to right ankle injuries during Tuesday's practice. Both are on a day-to-day status, but Crowe is the more questionable

of the two for Thursday's game.

The duo has accounted for 34.5 points of the 77.9 points per game that the Ducks have been averaging. If Fegent and Crowe are unable to play, it is expected that the Ducks will go with either a three-forward set or will look to backup center Sandie Edwards to step up her play.

The Ducks are focused on the matchup with Stanford. Since dropping a 105-69 contest to then No. 1-ranked Tennessee, the Cardinal not only has accumulated a string of 14 straight wins, but they have done so by an average margin of victory of 34.5 points per game.

Included in this massive margin is last Saturday's 109-53 win

over USC, which established a Pac-10 Conference record for the largest margin ever in a conference game.

The Cardinal is not a team that depends on two or three players to get the job done, as Stanford has 11 players averaging double figures in minutes played.

Stanford's team attitude has allowed the Cardinal to place first or second in 10 out of 11 Pac-10 statistical categories.

The statistical leader for Stanford is sophomore Kate Starbird, who paces the Cardinal in scoring (16.3 points per game), assists (3.9 average) and steals (3.0 average) in addition to leading the league in three-point field goal accuracy (51.2 percent).

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