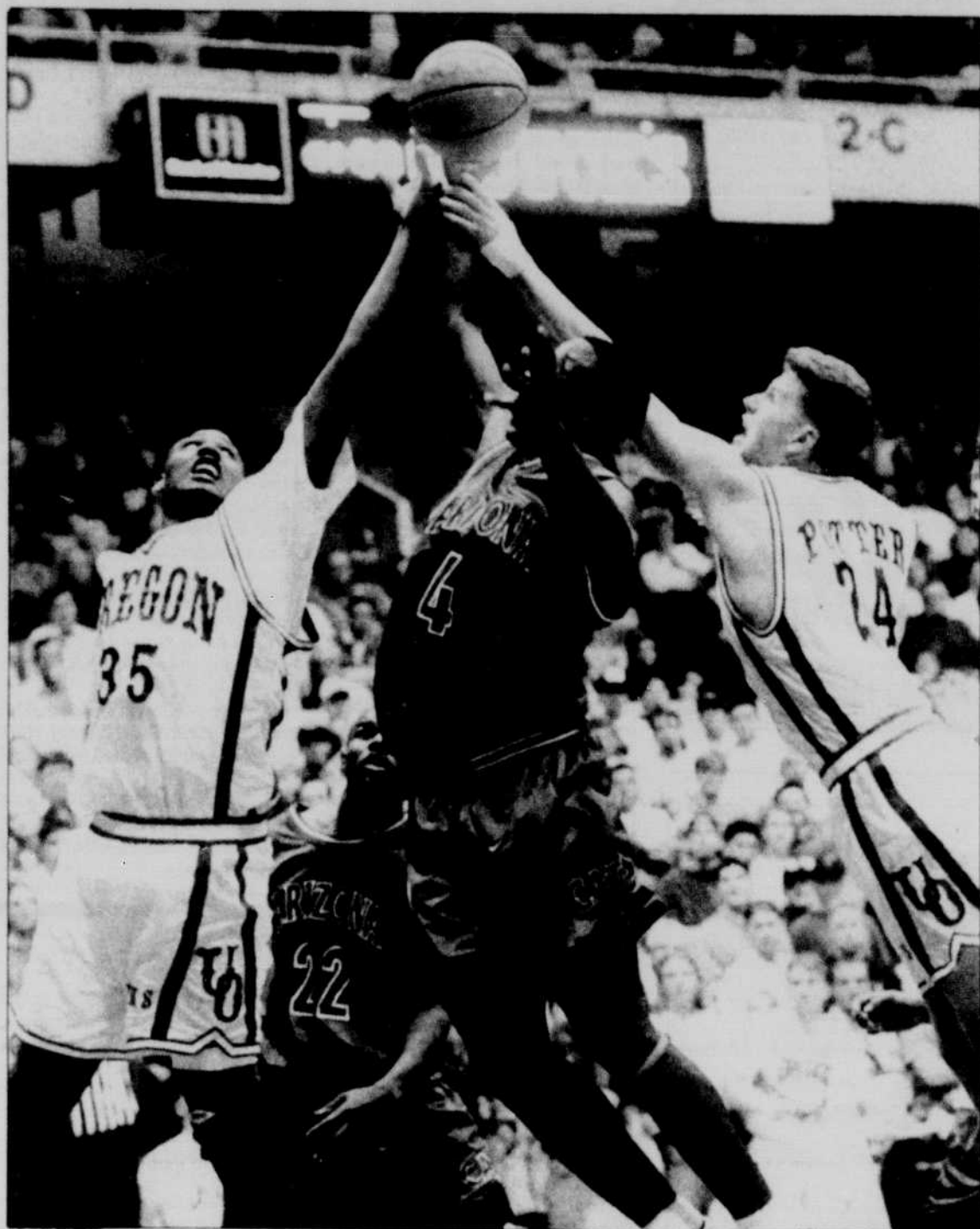




Rebounding should be the key for Oregon in this weekend's Civil War battle against Oregon State. GARY GRASS/EMERALD

Oregon battles time, Beavers on Saturday

Kris Henry
Oregon Daily Emerald

Time is running out on an Oregon team that is looking to earn a trip to the NCAA tournament in March for the first time since 1961.

The second half of the Ducks' Pacific-10 Conference schedule opens Saturday afternoon at 3:05 in McArthur Court when Oregon takes on Oregon State in the final Civil War encounter of the season.

It seems the entire year has consisted of "big" games and "crucial" encounters for Oregon and Saturday's revival of the Willamette Valley rivalry is no different.

A victory would give Oregon (13-5 overall and 5-4 in Pac-10 play) its first conference sweep of the Beavers since Gerald Ford was President in the 1975-76 season.

More importantly, an Oregon victory would keep the Ducks in the top 25 rankings and among a pack of league contenders for a tournament berth. The Ducks' recent stay in the top 25 rankings marks the first time in school history that the Oregon basketball team has been in the top 25 for five straight weeks.

The Greenballers are currently ranked No. 22 by The Associated Press and No. 20 by the CNN/USA Today coaches poll and are nestled right in the middle of the conference standings.

STANDINGS		
Men's basketball		
	CONF.	OVERALL
UCLA	8-2	15-2
Arizona	8-2	18-4
Arizona State	7-3	17-5
Stanford	6-4	15-4
WSU	6-4	11-7
Oregon	5-4	13-5
Oregon State	3-6	6-12
California	3-7	11-8
USC	2-8	7-13
Washington	1-9	5-13

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"I think it's important for this university to be ranked in the top 25 for five weeks in a row because it draws so much national attention," Oregon head coach Jerry Green said. "We've moved ourselves into a good position and just need to continue getting the job done."

Green added that Saturday's matchup is important not only because the state of Oregon and the Pac-10 will be looking at it but, since Oregon is ranked among the nation's elite now, it's become an important game because the entire nation will be looking at it.

And the entire nation will see a rejuvenated Oregon program that has matured since losing four of five Pac-10 contests.

"I think our team is convinced now that if we'll quit just going off on our own and

each of us trying to be an All-American and take the game as it comes, we seem to work better as a unit and are a lot more effective," Green said.

A rejuvenated Oregon State squad (6-12, 3-6) will also be a fixture in Saturday's contest at Mac Court. The team's makeup has been altered, with freshman Rob Williams assuming the point guard duties and sophomore center Jerohn Brown returning from injury.

The Pit will be sold out for the fifth straight occasion, a feat that hasn't been accomplished by the men's basketball team since the 1978-79 season.

In the Pac-10, Oregon is second (by three tenths) to UCLA in team scoring — dropping in 87 points per contest — and second in three-point field goal percentage, hitting 42 percent beyond the arc. The Ducks also rank third in rebounding with an average of 39.1 rebounds per game.

Senior guard Orlando Williams is fourth in Pac-10 scoring, averaging just over 19 per game, and his 81.7 percent-age from the free throw line puts Williams third in the league.

After Saturday, the Ducks continue their homestand with the arrival of the Washington schools. The Huskies take to Mac Court on Thursday at 7:05 p.m. and then the Cougars step into The Pit on Feb. 18, also at 7:05 p.m.

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