

Basketball support at Mac Court: the ultimate battle of the sexes

On any given weekend, there is an Oregon basketball team playing at MacArthur Court. On any given weekend, fans show up to watch 10 student athletes battle it out for a win. But it is which of the two teams that is playing that determines who shows up to cheer on the Ducks.

The women's basketball team has a 4-5 Pacific-10 Conference record and the men recently ended their six-game losing streak to give them a record of 3-6. These records may not be too different, but the attendance figures are. The last time the men were in town, more than 7,000 fans braved the cold weather and went to the game. Last Saturday night, a little more than 2,000 people showed up to watch the women.

Why is there such a dramatic difference between these two numbers?

The answer is simple: Nobody believes that women can play an exciting game like the men do, so they don't bother to show up to watch.

Okay, it may be true that Renae Fegent will never be dunking the ball over a defender, and you may not see an alley-oop from Cindie Edamura to Betty Ann Boeving, but that doesn't mean that the games aren't worth watching.

There is a major difference between men's and women's basketball, but it may not be obvious at first glance. The difference is the style of play. When the women get the ball, they run the set play that they are supposed to play. If the play is designed to get Arianne Boyer the ball for a lay-in, then that is usually what happens.

When the men get the ball, you never know what's going to happen, and sometimes, I doubt that head coach Jerry Green does either. How many times has Terik Brown seen a slight opening in the defense and taken a three-point shot? How many times has Kenya Wilkins tried to dish the ball inside to Kyle Milling or Rob Ramaker, only to see that won't happen, so he is forced to drive through the key for a lay-in himself? Sure, it might go in, but that wasn't what the play was designed to do.

But obviously, people have decided that exciting is better. To most people, seeing a play run like it was designed to do is not high up on their list of reasons to go to a basketball game.

Basketball is basketball, no matter who is playing it. The outcome of each game depends on what happens in the game, not the gender of the teams on the floor. But many fans have decided that women's basketball is not worth their time.

This isn't the case at Oregon State, though. The Beavers have two very different teams playing basketball right now — a winning women's team and a losing men's team. The women's team is ranked No. 16 in the nation. The men's team, on the other hand, owns a 1-8 Pac-10 record.

Because this difference was predicted before the season ever started, the sports editor at the Corvallis Gazette-Times decided that his section would do something different this year: It would focus on the women's team this season instead of the men's team. The women get the front-of-the-sports-page, color-picture stories. The stories about the men's games gets put wherever there is room.

What has been the outcome of this reverse coverage?

The women's team is consistently attracting more than 7,000 fans to its games. The game last Saturday against UCLA drew the third-largest crowd in Beaver history.

That is how it should be. When a team is doing that well and is nationally ranked, it should be attracting record numbers to the game, whether it is men or women playing.

The Gazette-Times should be applauded for its decision to cover women's basketball so in-depth. The paper is even inserting game programs on gameday so Beaver fans can get to know the players before they go to the game. Readers don't even have to go to the game to be familiar

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with the team. This is another excellent decision by the sports staff at the Gazette-Times. Nationally ranked teams deserve that sort of coverage.

After all, what fan can't name every member of the Oregon men's basketball team that went to the NCAA Tournament last year? For that matter, what fan can't name the starting line-up for the 10-10 Ducks right now?

There are differences between men's and women's basketball. But there are differences between any two particular basketball teams. The gender of the players should not matter. If somebody wants to catch a good basketball game on a Thursday or Saturday, they should look to see what time the game starts, not who is playing.

The 2,000 or so loyal fans that frequently attend the women's games do not include a huge student section. In fact, the lower section, usually reserved for students at men's games, is open to anyone. Last Saturday, it was filled mostly with women and little girls. It is encouraging to see females attending women's games, but where were the men?

The ticket takers at Mac Court don't count how many of each gender come through the doors, but at Saturday's game, I am sure that less than 50 percent were men. In fact, I think more than 50 percent of the fans were girls under the age of 10. They seemed to be the most loyal, too, as they chanted "Go Ducks!" over and over and over.

The women play at home tonight. The men are up in Seattle. To see a good basketball game, it isn't necessary to travel hundreds of miles. Just make the short trip to Mac Court.

Andrea DeYoung, a sophomore majoring in journalism, is the assistant sports editor for the Emerald.



Andrea DeYoung

Men's basketball: Ducks have learned to compete

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averaging 18.7 points per game. He was named the Pac-10 Player of the Week Jan. 26 after helping his team sweep the Bay Area schools.

Senior guards Jason Hamilton and Bryant Boston provide the team with experience, as they average 7.8 points and 14.3 points respectively. The Huskies also boast a 7-footer in freshman center Patrick Femerling, though he has only started five games and is averaging 3.2 points.

"They have really improved every year that coach [Bob] Bender has been there," Green said. "The difference is that they are veteran this year."

That experience has led to Washington victories over Arizona in Tucson, USC in Seattle and Oregon at MacArthur Court.

"The big thing is that they are confident," Green said. "It takes confidence to bring on success,

and I think they did that against us down here and in Arizona."

But before the loss to the Huskies earlier this year, Oregon had a five-game winning streak against Washington.

"We've played Washington well for quite a while," Green said, "but we did not play them very well down here."

But that was the beginning of Oregon's mid-season losing streak, and according to Green, the confidence gained by the Ducks' performances last weekend will pay dividends for the team soon.

"What I hope that we can get out of this trip to California is first, that we can slow down and calm down offensively and manage to shoot 50 percent for a game," Green said. "Secondly, confidence — that we can be confident that we can win. If there is a third it would be that we have learned to compete at this level."

MEN'S BASKETBALL



Thursday, 7 p.m.
at Hec Edmundson Pavilion
Probable starters
OREGON

Pos.	Num.	Name	Ppg.
F	#11	Kyle Milling	13.6
F	#23	Jamar Curry	10.1
C	#33	Rob Ramaker	6.5
G	#10	Kenya Wilkins	14.2
G	#15	Jamal Lawrence	13.7

WASHINGTON

Pos.	Num.	Name	Ppg.
F	#3	Mark Sanford	18.7
F	#22	Patrick Femerling	3.2
C	#12	Jason Hamilton	7.8
G	#15	Bryant Boston	14.3
G	#23	Jamie Booker	7.0

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OREGON

vs.

WSU

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