

Oregon lands strong football recruiting class

■ **FOOTBALL:** A wide receiver and a few replacements for a depleted secondary top the list of signees

By Trevor Kearney
Sports Editor

Two consecutive prestigious bowl appearances translated into a top-rate recruiting class that included one of the nation's foremost prep football players for the Oregon football team, which announced its 1996 letter-of-intent signees on Wednesday.

The Ducks' big fish was wide receiver

LaCorey Collins of Skyline High School in Oakland, Calif. Among his many honors, Collins, who verbally committed to Oregon a few weeks ago, was a member of the Parade All-America list. The versatile player had 51 passes for 746 yards and 12 sacks his senior year.

"LaCorey Collins is what you would call an impact player," head coach Mike Bellotti said. "He is a great football player that I have known about for a long time."

The 6-foot-4, 210-pound blue-chip recruit gives the Ducks a big receiver, something Oregon has lacked in the past. "He is a big, tall, fast, strong wide receiver," Bellotti said. "He is a great football player that I expect will be on the football field for us next year to give us the big receiver we have not had in a long time."

The Ducks' recruiting class stands to be one of the best in the Pacific-10 Conference as well as the country.

"You really don't know for a couple of years how good a class is, and I don't worry about where we will be ranked," Bellotti said. "I think because of several of the members of that class it will be ranked very highly in the Pac-10 and certainly [as] one of the better classes we have had."

Part of why the Ducks' recruiting class

is so strong is the team's trip to the Cotton Bowl last season and the Rose Bowl the year before, Bellotti said.

"When you go to bowl games you get in more doors, doors stay open for you a little bit longer," Bellotti said. "That increased this year with the two-straight New Year's Day bowl appearances. I think we got mentioned in the same breath as Nebraska, Ohio State, Texas and Miami and all the rest of those."

The Ducks tapped Skyline for another top prep in Jason Cooper, a defensive

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Ducks looking to win again as Washington schools come to town

■ **WOMEN'S BASKETBALL:** After a loss to USC, the Ducks try to get back on the winning track tonight

By Pete Schneider
Sports Reporter

The Oregon women's basketball team has rebounded smoothly, pushing its record to the elusive .500 mark after losing its first four Pacific-10 Conference contests. Following the 75-48 spanking of UCLA last Thursday, things were looking good for the Ducks — that is, until USC burst their bubble.

"I think it was really deflating," Oregon coach Jody Runge said. "I thought we played well enough to win, but we just couldn't figure out a way to put the ball in the basket. It's deflating because we're not on a winning streak and ... we lost to a team that was below us [in the standings]. Now they are even with us when we had a chance to win."

Doing a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde impersonation Saturday night at McArthur Court, Oregon

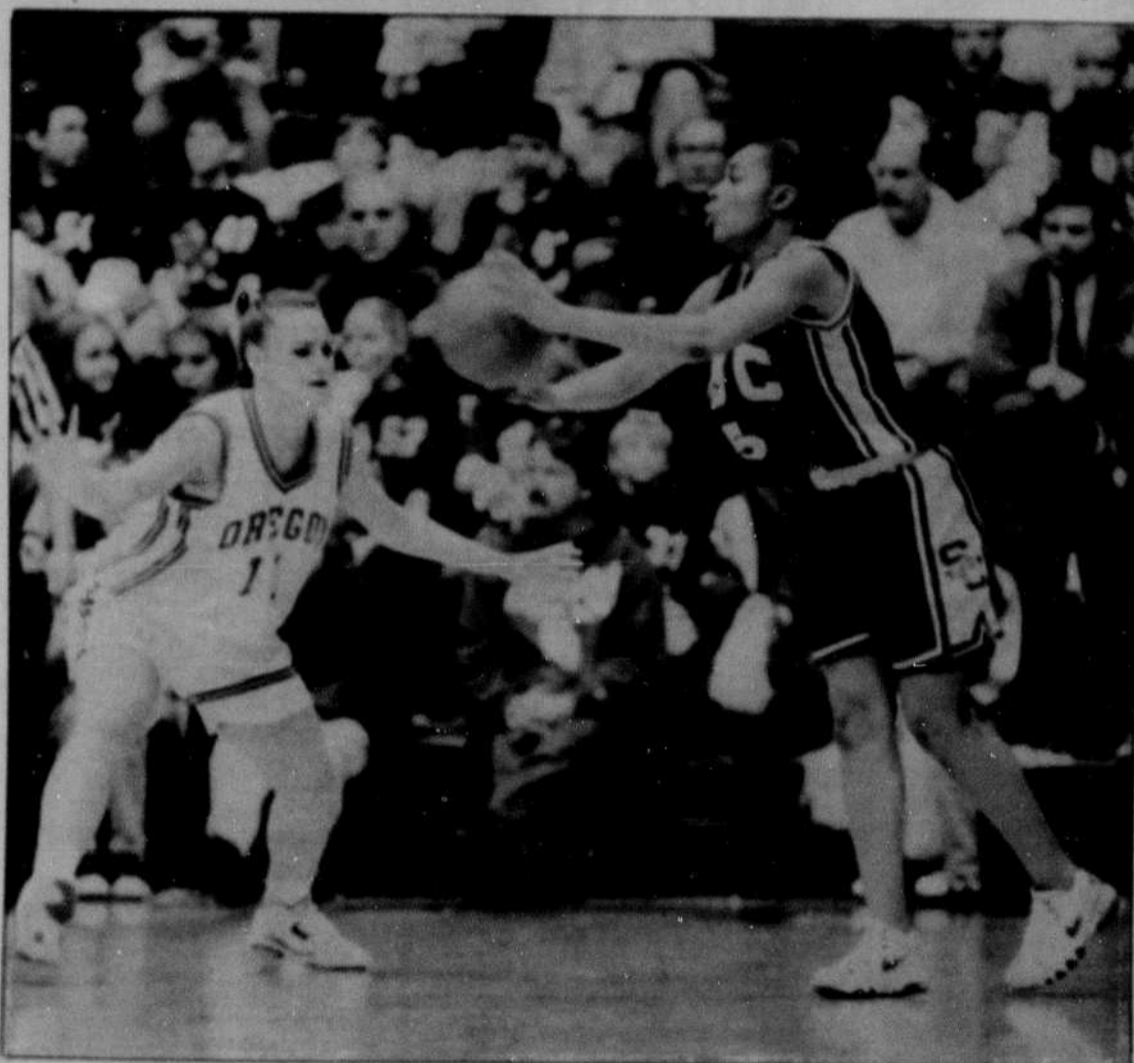
(12-7 overall, 4-5 Pac-10), which previously held its opponents to just .308 shooting, allowed the Trojans to score 75 points on .443 shooting. The Ducks, coming off their most prolific scoring outing of the Pac-10 season against the Bruins, had to go to overtime to rack up 66 points.

"We didn't pull it together against USC," freshman guard Lisa Bowyer said. "I don't know what the difference was between that and Thursday against UCLA. It was just a completely different game."

The pin that popped Oregon's victory balloon was the lack of offense the team showed in the clutch, as the Ducks could manage only two points in overtime against USC. The Trojans went on an 11-2 run to end the game, effectively ending the Oregon winning streak.

"I felt like USC hadn't played the way that they're capable of," Runge said. "They were just a talented basketball team that could make the big plays while we couldn't."

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Guard Lisa Bowyer has been a key to the Ducks' turnaround, averaging more than 10 points per game.

Oregon searches for success in Seattle

■ **MEN'S BASKETBALL:** The Ducks look to break the .500 mark on Thursday night

By Trevor Kearney
Sports Editor

Confidence breeds success.

And after a confidence-boosting road trip to Los Angeles last week, the Oregon men's basketball team is hoping it will translate into success tonight against the surprising Washington Huskies in Seattle.

The Ducks (10-10 overall, 3-6 Pacific-10 Conference) start the second half of their four-game road trip tonight at 7 p.m. at Hec Edmundson Pavilion in a game televised by Prime Sports Network. The long road trip would seem to be a distraction to a team that hasn't even been able to win at home on a consistent basis, but it has actually been a blessing in disguise.

The Ducks went to California as 17-point underdogs to UCLA, but came back home having played tough with the Bruins and having beaten the USC Trojans handily in the next game, snapping a six-game losing streak.

"It's not easy playing on the road. This is a really unusual road trip in that we play four road games back-to-back," head coach Jerry Green said.

But the Ducks, who are healthy except for an injury to Kenya Wilkins that will have him wearing a brace on his left leg, have started to compete

after struggling during the middle of the season. Particularly offensively, Oregon has stepped its play up a level, leaving .500 free-throw shooting and missed jump shot horrors behind. Against USC, the Ducks shot .611 from the field, hit 9-of-17 three-pointers and sank 24-of-27 free throws.

"We have really executed and shot well offensively," Green said, adding that the team has settled down and started to play its style of game.

"We were a little bit more patient, not like a truck falling off of a cliff," he said. "Finally, we are starting to show patience. Also, we are starting to compete."

Which was evident not only in last week's road trip, but against Arizona at home two weeks ago as well.

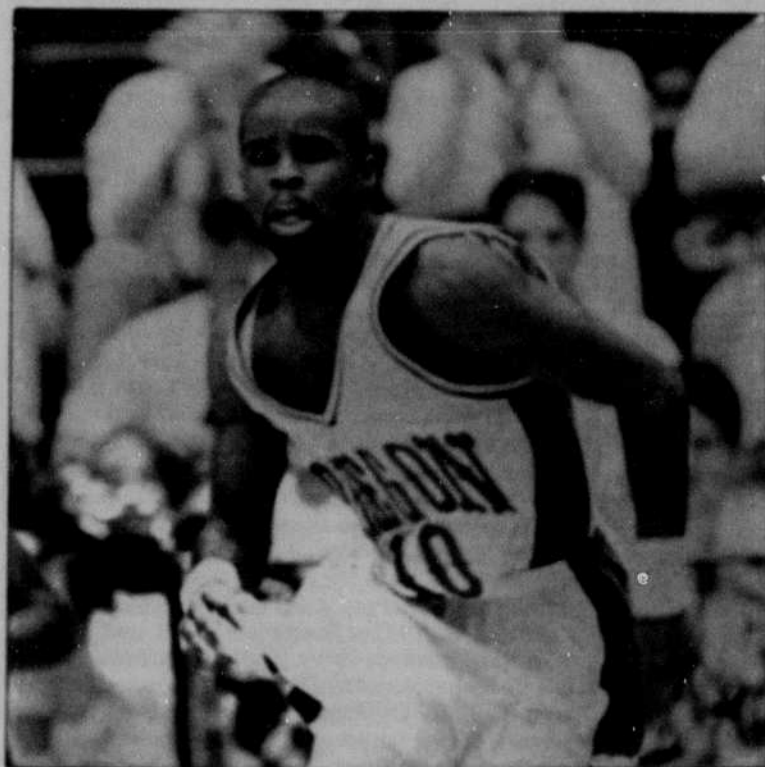
"The past two weeks we've really gotten to a level where we can compete," Green said, adding that the Ducks' use of the zone defense, particularly against Southern California, has helped them. "I think the zone gives us an opportunity to settle in, whereas in the man-to-man you are sort of scratching and clawing."

But the Ducks face Washington tonight, a team that already has confidence and is now experiencing success.

The Huskies are 13-5 overall and 6-3 in the Pac-10, and are led by forward Mark Sanford, who is

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Guard Kenya Wilkins may be hindered tonight by a reoccurring injury that forces him to wear a brace on his left leg.