

UO hopes game will mark beginning of turnaround

■ **GAME PREVIEW:** Oregon looks to be a better rebounding team against the visiting Washington Huskies

By Andrea DeYoung
Assistant Sports Editor

Call the Oregon men's basketball team out of the locker room — halftime is over.

Nine games into the Pacific-10 Conference schedule and nine games to go, the Ducks are starting all over again. But things are drastically different than when the Pac-10 season began.

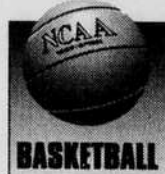
Oregon isn't undefeated. In fact, the Ducks aren't even undefeated at home. Instead, they are 12-6 overall, 3-6 in the conference and 1-3 at McArthur Court against Pac-10 opponents.

The first half of the season included losses at both Washington schools, against both Bay Area schools, at Arizona and against Southern California. But avenging those losses can begin tonight when Oregon takes on the Huskies.

The Huskies are 12-5 overall and 5-4 in the Pac-10. This may not be a stellar record as it ranks them sixth in the conference, but Washington is fresh off a 92-88 win over then-No. 10 Arizona last weekend.

This doesn't mean there is no hope for the

Ducks, who lost to Arizona by 22 points. Oregon has seen the Huskies before this season and came one basket away from beating them. In the 78-77 thriller, Jamal Lawrence hit a three-pointer with 10 seconds remaining in the game to give the Ducks a 77-76 advantage. But then the



man who had the Ducks' number all night, 7-foot-0 Todd MacCulloch, took the ball in for a layup and two points. MacCulloch then blocked Kenya Wilkins' final shot attempt as the buzzer sounded.

Oregon will be looking to stop MacCulloch tonight from a repeat performance. He had 19 points and 10 rebounds against the Ducks, including 11 points down the stretch.

Oregon tried to keep a body on him all night, but Kyle Milling and Rob Ramaker both fouled out, leaving the Ducks without two of their biggest players.

Milling said the key is to keep MacCulloch out of the paint.

"He's a very big kid," he said. "We have to do a good job on him and keep him off the block because if he's a little bit further out, he's not as effective."

Another Husky who is a scoring threat is Mark Sanford, who had 21 points in the last contest. Sanford has continued to play well since, averaging 17 points and 7.4 rebounds per game, including 26 points and eight rebounds against Arizona last weekend.

Although the Ducks are glad to have the experience of facing the Huskies this season, head coach Jerry Green says that it goes both ways.

"I think it helps a lot because we can scout our film from when we played them before. You also know the players," he said. "Washington knows what we are going to do, and we know what they're going to do. It's just a matter of figuring out how to stop the other guy and that's not going to be easy against their inside power game."

This may be one of the biggest concerns for the Ducks, who were out-rebounded by 20 against USC last weekend.

"I think [rebounding] is a big concern," Green said. "We led the league in rebounding last year. This year we've had three games where we really weren't competitive on the boards. We're going to challenge our players to rebound the basketball, and if we have to, we'll play a bigger line-up at times. But I think a lot of it has to do with being relentless. We're not the most athletic team,

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Head Coach, Men's Basketball

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so we have to use our heads and our bodies to try to box out and get the ball."

Oregon was also hurt against the Trojans by the absence of Wilkins, who played only 11 minutes in the second half. The guard had suffered back spasms during the game and was forced to watch the Ducks be defeated as he sat on the bench. Despite the fact that he didn't work out on Monday, Wilkins was back in practice the rest of the week and is expected to start tonight's game.

The Ducks are looking up in the standings at teams they will face again, and the buzzer is about to sound for the second half to begin.

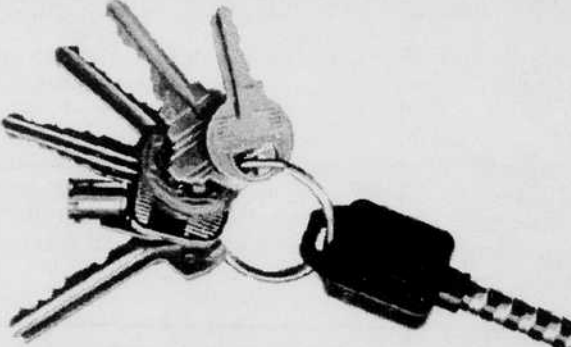


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Cougars sign hometown player

■ **WSU RECRUITS:** Washington State signed 15 players to letters-of-intent on the opening day of signing on Wednesday

The Associated Press

PULLMAN, Wash. — Serign Marong of Pullman made Washington State coach Mike Price's day.

The linebacker grew up "a stone's throw" from Price's Pullman home, and was a key player among the 15 who signed letters-of-intent Wednesday to play for the Cougars.

"He committed to us before the football season started," Price said. "He turned away numerous offers and visits from other schools. He showed tremendous loyalty."

The Pullman High School product runs a 4.4 in the 40-yard dash and is a top student, Price said.

"He's become a special guy for me," Price said.

But, he added, like the other freshmen signed Wednesday, Marong likely won't play next season.

The Cougars needed to fill openings on the offensive line and at linebacker, and Price was pleased with the players signed.

"I was real satisfied with our recruiting job," Price said. "We got excellent speed."

That includes five players who run 4.5 in the 40

and four who log 4.7, he said.

Among the signees with a chance to play next year are junior college transfer cornerback Earl Riley of Merced Junior College, Price said.

Taeao Salasua, a defensive end, is a transfer from Long Beach Community College who may also see plenty of playing time, Price said.

Price said nearly all the players signed are expected to be academically eligible to play.

New NCAA rules that will allow scholarship athletes to hold part-time jobs may have cost the Cougars one recruit who worried he could not find a job in the small town, Price said.

Rumors that Price might take another coaching job also cramped recruiting for a time, the coach acknowledged.

"We were pretty up front with everybody," Price said.

Sam Baurichter of Gig Harbor was the only quarterback signed. Price compared the 6-foot-5, 190-pounder to current quarterback Ryan Leaf. The other in-state players signed were Nate Mallory of Kent and Anthony Matthews of Tacoma.

The other community college transfer in the fall will be offensive tackle Ryan Tujague of Chabot Junior College in California.

Preview: Oregon looks to control UW's Redd

■ **Continued from Page 9**

Tournament], or which ones are most important. We are just trying to focus on playing the very best game we can and letting the chips fall where they may."

Tonight's game, which is a classic rivalry match-up, has much meaning for both teams' positioning in the conference standings. The Ducks (13-5 overall, 6-3 Pac-10) are deadlocked with Arizona for third place, while the Huskies (10-8, 5-4) are on their heels in fourth. Depending on how the other conference leaders fair, an Oregon loss could prove to be costly later in the season.

Oregon's main objective against Washington will be defending guard-slash-everything Jamie Redd. In the last meeting, Redd's presence was felt all over the court before her early exit due to foul trouble. The sophomore led all scorers with 27 points while roaming the court grabbing rebounds.

"We're just trying to stay in

front of [Redd] and keep her off the offensive boards and try to pressure her shots," Runge said. "She is a great player and she is going to get some shots off, and she is going to make some baskets and make some great plays. We're just hoping we stay between her and the basket and not turn it over to her on defense."

According to Oregon's Arianne Boyer, if the Ducks stick to their defense they should be able to contain Redd.

"We just need to keep playing our fundamental defense," Boyer said. "It is really frustrating for other people when they have a hard time driving or getting wide open shots against us. We just need to continue getting do that."

While the team's defense has held its own this season, the Ducks have had to worry about their offensive production. Runge has stressed throughout the season that the offense must increase its scoring, and finally it seems as

if the players are adjusting to the system.

"I think the last two games have been the best as a team offensively," guard Natalie Hughes said. "We're passing [the ball] well and actually running the offense."

Last weekend in southern California, Oregon earned a split of games against UCLA and USC, but more importantly found one player that could score, and saw the return of another scorer. Hughes hit for 29 points on 9-of-11 shooting in the win over the Bruins, while Boyer recorded a total of 38 points in the two games.

If Oregon's recent offensive success continues during the remainder of its four-game road trip, the Ducks could be set to return home after Saturday's game against Washington State with a NCAA Tournament berth nearly in the bag. If not, games against conference-leading Stanford, USC, and Arizona become all the more important.

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