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Duck women looking for third straight win

■ **GAME PREVIEW:** Cal has lost its last six but is coming off a three-point loss to second-place USC

By Ryan Frank
Sports Reporter

The quote of the day for the Oregon women's basketball team: One game at a time.

With No. 3 Stanford on their agenda for Saturday afternoon, the Ducks must first play eighth-place California tonight at McArthur Court at 7 p.m.

The Golden Bears (6-14 overall, 2-9 Pacific-10 Conference) come into tonight's contest having lost six in a row and eight of their last nine, but their most recent loss was enough to put a scare into the Ducks.

Against USC on Feb. 8, California was leading by four points with one minute, 50 seconds remaining. But the second-place Trojans scored the final seven points of the game for the 66-63 win.

"Cal's improved a lot this season," Oregon

center Renae Fegent said. "They had a great game against USC last weekend, and they are going to be tough."

Earlier this season, the Ducks found out first hand just how tough the Golden Bears could be.

After Oregon led by as many as 14 points in the first half, California fought back to tie the game at 56 late in the second half. It was not until guard Lisa Bowyer hit two free throws with 7.1 seconds remaining that the game was out of California's reach. Bowyer's free throws gave the Ducks a 68-64 victory, their seventh straight over the Golden Bears.

"They just hang in there," Oregon head coach Jody Runge said. "They shoot threes; they're playing with confidence and playing well."

California is led by Patrycja Czepiec, who is scoring 17.2 points per game (good enough for sixth in the Pac-10), and Tigard native Jennie Leander, who is averaging 11.5 points and 8.8 rebounds per game.

“Cal's improved a lot this season. They had a great game against USC last weekend, and they are going to be tough.”

— Renae Fegent
UO Center

Oregon (15-5, 8-3) is currently heading in the opposite direction of California. The Ducks have won two straight and three of their last four, the only loss coming from second-place USC.

"We picked up our defense in the last four games, and I think if you play good defense then your offense just comes," guard Natalie Hughes said.

If the Ducks are able to beat California and pull off the upset over Stanford, they would be in prime position for a their fourth straight bid to the NCAA Tournament.

Boyer: Forward had 14 points off the bench against ASU

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When Oregon returned from its Bay Area road trip, Oregon head coach Jody Runge decided it was time to make some changes.

For the first time in 29 games, and almost a year ago to the date, Arianne Boyer would not be in the Ducks' starting line-up.

But the woman known by Duck fans simply as "Red," responded.

Boyer came off the bench to have her best shooting performance since Dec. 19 while scoring 14 points and grabbing eight rebounds.

"It has been a really hard struggle for [Boyer]," Runge said after Oregon's 74-62 win over the Sun Devils. "In the California game she had a hard time scoring inside. [Not having Boyer start] is a hard decision, but I think she handled it well."

Not starting the Arizona State game seemed to get Boyer back on track toward the kind of season Oregon fans had been accustomed to seeing.

In the Ducks' next game, a 60-57 loss to Arizona, Boyer recorded 17 points in Boyer-like fashion. The senior drove to the hoop time and again, drawing foul after foul, finishing 7-of-11 from the free-throw line.

Following her 17-point outing against the Wildcats, Boyer's play continued to pick up steam. The Ducks faced a pivotal four-game road swing with postseason implications — and again Boyer responded.

Over that four-game stretch, she averaged 19.5 points while shooting 66 percent from the field, and the Ducks went 3-1 with wins at UCLA, Washington and Washington State.

Boyer's play during those four games increased her season shooting percentage from 47 percent to 51 percent, and her performance against Washington and Washington State earned her Pac-10 Player of Week honors for the first time in her career.

What caused Boyer's drop in

performance?

"I really don't know what to attribute that to," Runge said. "We tried to attribute that to something, and I don't think we ever found an answer."

However, Boyer said the zone defense Oregon saw early this season made things tough on Oregon's inside players, including herself.

"It is hard to get the ball inside when there are other people in there with you; and once you do get the ball inside, you get double-teamed very quickly," Boyer said.

Boyer also mentioned the tougher Pac-10 defense as a problem.

"I think that once Pac-10 play starts, the [other teams] know who all the players are on the team," Boyer said. "They can key on certain players, and you get more difficult defensive assignments on you."

But like Runge, Boyer's fellow 1996 first-team all-Pac-10 selec-

“It is hard to get the ball inside when there are other people in there with you; and once you do get the ball inside, you get double-teamed very quickly.”

— Arianne Boyer
UO Forward

tion Renae Fegent is at a loss for words as to what happened to Boyer, calling it "one of them things."

Even if she doesn't know what the problem was, Runge is happy to have her leading scorer back in preseason form.

"She just has worked it out, and we're glad to see she is back on track," Runge said.

If Boyer is in fact "back on track," the Ducks could be steam rolling their way right into the NCAA Tournament.

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