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Runge: ASU a defensive threat

The Sun Devils' defense leads the Pac-10 in turnovers forced

By Alex Pond
Sports Reporter

It was easy for the Oregon Ducks to get up for the No. 7 Arizona Wildcats Thursday night.

Getting up for Arizona State (7-8 overall, 3-3 Pacific-10 Conference) could be more of a challenge, Oregon head coach Jody Runge said.

Oregon needs to avoid a let-down when it plays the Sun Devils at McArthur Court on Saturday at 1 p.m.

"My concern is playing a big game that's emotional like Arizona and then coming out flat against Arizona State," Runge said earlier this week. "Arizona State's playing definitely well enough to beat us if we don't play our best game."

On paper, the Sun Devils appear to be a team the Ducks, 9-6, 5-

2 after Thursday's 68-66 win over Arizona, should beat.

But records can be misleading. The Sun Devils have played better the past two weeks after getting blown out by Southern California and UCLA in the first two Pac-10 games. They bounced back to sweep the Washington schools two weeks ago and refused to lose big to Arizona last Saturday, hanging around most the game before falling 70-60.

The Sun Devils got back on the winning track Thursday night when they beat Oregon State 85-79 in Corvallis.

"They're playing very tough, and they're playing very well," Runge said. "We need to be able to handle their pressure. They're trying to force an up-tempo style defensively to get a lot of turnovers

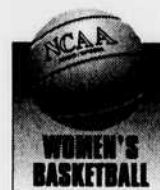
and get you out of your offense."

The Sun Devils lead the Pac-10 in forcing opponents into 26.6 turnovers per game, although they give it away a little more than 25 times a game.

"They do a very good job of pressuring at the wing," Runge said, "and we're going to have to do a very good job of executing our offense and getting first and second shots against them."

With that pressure, the Sun Devils get 12 steals a game, stressing the fact that Oregon guards Natalie Hughes and Lisa Bowyer need to take care of the ball.

As a team, Arizona State averages 68.6 points per game and is led by forward Stephanie Freeman, who scores 14.5 points per game (eighth in the Pac-10) and grabs 4.8 rebounds per game. Center Rachel Holt leads the Sun Devils on the boards with 5.3 rebounds per game and is third in the Pac-10 in blocks with 1.1 a game.



Ducks must stop Sun Devil guards

Arizona State's Jeremy Veal is second in the Pac-10 in scoring, averaging 21 points per contest

By Rob Moseley
Sports Reporter

Despite losing by 30 points to Arizona last night, Oregon can rest assured it probably wasn't poor strategy that led to the defeat.

After facing the Wildcats' All-American guards, Miles Simon and Mike Bibby, on Thursday, the Ducks will see a similar attack from Arizona State in their matchup on Saturday. Guards Ahlon Lewis and Jeremy Veal are the undisputed leaders of the Sun Devils, who's tallest player is just 6-foot-9.

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said the Ducks' preparations for Arizona State will be identical to those for Arizona. The Sun Devils' propensity for the quick shot differentiates them from the Wildcats, but both teams rely on spectacular guard play to win games.

For the Sun Devils (12-6 overall, 2-3 Pacific-10 Conference), if Lewis is the straw that stirs the drink, then Veal is the drink. Lewis leads the Pac-10 in assists with nine per game, but Arizona State's success is

firmly in the hands of Veal, who thus far is second in the Pac-10 in scoring to Simon with 21 points per game and entered the weekend needing just 156 points to become the Sun Devils' career scoring leader.

Veal also stands sixth all time on Arizona State's career assists list and seventh all time in steals, and stands a good chance of winning a second consecutive All-Pac-10 designation after this season. The senior has not missed a game in his career, a streak of 108 contests.

Obviously that includes this season, during which Arizona State has used the same starting lineup in every game and just one reserve, Urit Kelly, has also appeared in each game. With just nine scholarship players, including one former walkon in Ron DuBois, the Sun Devils have been forced to play their starters for virtually entire games. In fact Lewis is averaging 39.4 of 40 minutes per contest.

Arizona State has lost two of its last three, defeating Washington State after consecutive losses to UCLA and Washington. The Sun Devils will look to end a three-game losing to Oregon overall and another three-game losing streak to the Ducks at home.



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Loss: UA led by as many as 27 before half

Continued from Page 11

31.1 percent from the field, including four for 20 from three-point range.

Jamar Curry paced the Ducks with 11 points, and Henry Madden and Jonathan Nelson scored eight apiece, with Nelson also grabbing a game-high 11 rebounds.

Looking hesitant and turnover-prone on offense, Oregon started the game by turning the ball over six times in the first five minutes as Arizona cruised to an easy 15-0 lead.

The Wildcats were up by as many as 27 before Oregon scored seconds before halftime to go to the locker room down 45-20.

"We played horrible," summed

up Oregon head coach Ernie Kent during a postgame radio interview. "That is the first time this team has looked that bad and that flat. Every single guy to a man had no energy, no legs, no stamina, couldn't run, couldn't jump, couldn't shoot."

"Sometimes you can look into the guys' eyes and you may find one guy like that who is really out of sync, like they're sleep walking out there ... but today we were a flat, dead, pancake-style basketball team."

Going in, Kent said containing guards Bibby and Simon would be a mitigating factor to the Ducks' chances of victory. Kent wanted his defenders to keep the two play-

ers from driving to the basket or getting easy shots from the perimeter.

Oregon wasn't successful doing either.

"It was a big difference in the game," Kent said. "They had their way with us."

Despite being down by as many as 34 in the second half, Oregon remained competitive, beating Arizona in total rebounds 44 to 38 and forcing the Wildcats into 20 turnovers.

"A win is a win," said Arizona head coach Lute Olson. "But we did not necessarily look very good doing it. We have to keep the intensity up and not let the game get out of our hands."

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