

Men

Continued from Page 11

duce a better wire-to-wire effort. However, Payne does not want Tanner to shoulder all of the responsibility Saturday.

"When he's had to carry too much of the load, we haven't been very successful," Payne said. "We have to have a good balance in our offense, as well as a solid defense performance."

"If we do those things, then Dino will have a chance to impact the game at the end."

Ducks head coach Ernie Kent is also keenly aware of the large effect Tanner, who is averaging almost 16 points, five assists and two steals per game, has had in Oregon State's resurrection this season.

"He understands what it takes to get it done at this level," Kent said.

"I think, obviously, that his teammates can sense that within him."

"Even though as a sophomore sometimes it's tough to do that, those special players that have that kind of confidence within themselves, I certainly think they can step up and lead teams."

In addition to recording its season-low point total in the first meeting with its archrivals, Oregon also had its worst performances of the season in shooting from the field, the free-throw line and three-point range. The Ducks shot just 32 percent from the floor, 42 percent from the line and 15 percent from the arc.

But since that demoralizing loss, which left Oregon with a 2-7 Pac-10 record at the conclusion of the league season's first half, the Ducks

have rejuvenated their winning ways from earlier in the season.

Before Saturday's 92-86 defeat against No. 8 Arizona, Oregon had won four straight, including its initial two Pac-10 home wins of the season with a sweep of the Washington schools on Jan. 14 and 16.

"In Oregon, we're playing a team that's playing at a real high level," Payne said. "So we're going to have to do a great job in a lot of areas."

The Ducks' own point guard, Darius Wright, has been instrumental in the late-season change, as he paced the team in scoring in both games against the Washington schools and contributed 14 points and eight assists in the near-upset of the Wildcats.

Women

Continued from Page 11

streak under Runge, is that Oregon has won 21 in a row against Northwest opponents dating back to 1995.

Meanwhile, Oregon State hasn't been victorious against its in-state rival since 1996.

"We're trying to do everything to give our fans something to cheer for," Oregon State head coach Judy Spolstra said.

Oregon "has terrific size and they can bump you around quite a bit. We played solid in the first game by not allowing too many shots. But our scoring drought in the second half hurt us."

Freshman point guard Shaquala Williams has led the Ducks in scoring in five of their last eight Pac-10 games, including a 15-point performance against the Beavers last month.

"Shaq is playing great for us," Runge said. "She's had a huge impact of on our success this season."

The only other time the Ducks were in the hunt for the Pac-10 crown so late in the season was in 1986-87 when Oregon went into the last week of the season tied for the conference lead with Southern California and Washington with a 13-3 record. The Ducks and Huskies dropped their next game, giving USC its first conference title in women's basketball.

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Wrestling

Continued from Page 11

Looking for his first Pac-10 crown, No. 17 Christian will compete at the 157-pound weight class. Christian's toughest competition is expected to be Oregon State's Eric Jorgensen, ranked No. 20, and Boise State's No. 4 Larry Quisel.

Lee made it to the Pac-10 finals last year before losing to All-American Aaron Simpson of Arizona State. This season, the No. 15 sophomore is 5-1 against Pac-10 opponents and 16-7 for the year.

Placing high on Saturday would be a very positive thing for Lee because he ended his season on a negative note, losing to Brigham Young's Scott Coleman on Feb. 16. Lee also was suspended against Arizona State on Feb. 5 for violating NCAA weight-cutting violations.

The title race at the 141-pound weight class may find Oregon's David Watson to be a surprise competitor. Watson compiled a 16-11 record in his freshman season with the Ducks, but he is 0-3 against the Pac-10's top three seeds.

The individual title race should be exciting for the Ducks, but Sonnen made it clear that the team, which has had to forfeit at 125 and 133 pounds for most of the season, is going to be competitive also.

"It's not quantity as much as quality," Sonnen said. "Our big guns will all be there. At 25 and 33, they may not have scored us many points, anyway. The guys who are going to be there will be in shape and ready to go."

"This is finally a chance where we have the potential to do well."

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