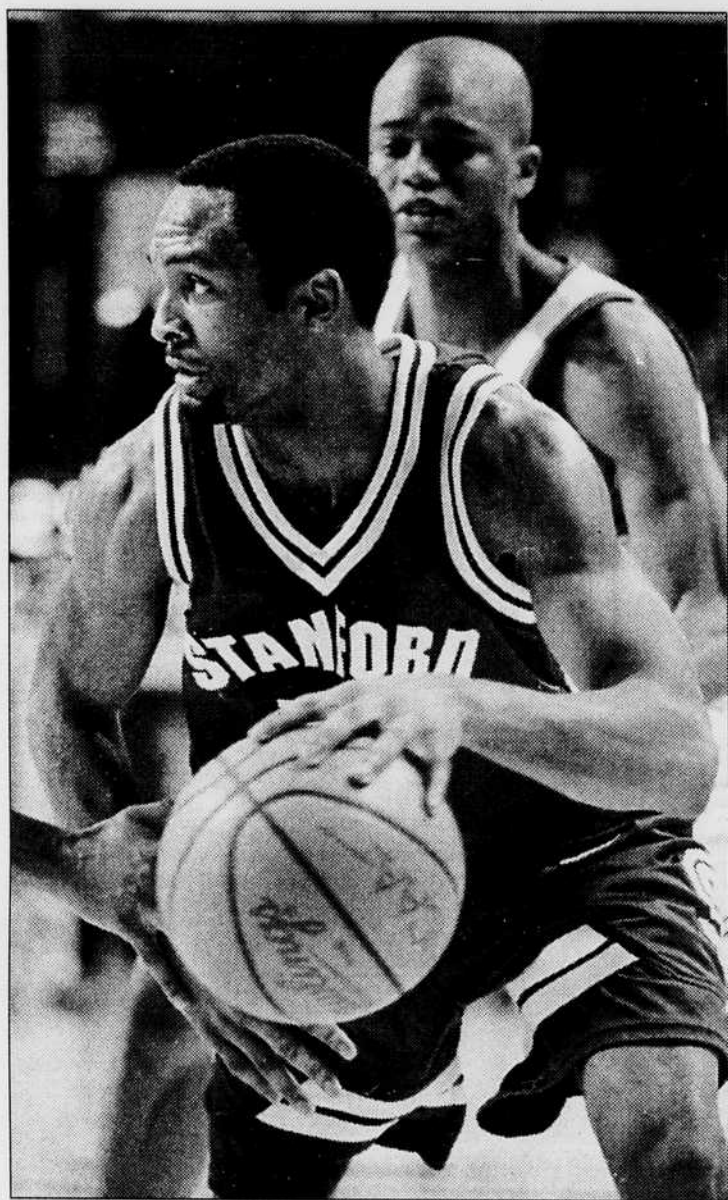


Stanford lives up to favorite's role with first Pac-10 title



After outplaying Jason Terry, Stanford's Arthur Lee was named player of the week. *Emerald*

The inevitable happened Saturday night.

No. 6 Stanford, everybody's Pacific-10 Conference favorite, ended any league-championship drama by disposing of No. 13 Arizona, 98-83, at Maples Pavilion in Palo Alto, Calif.

Cardinal Arthur Lee sealed the victory and league title by outplaying the Wildcats' Jason Terry, the likely Pac-10 player of the year.

In a matchup of senior point guards with national acclaim, Lee poured in a career-high 29 points, including 12 free throws in 12 attempts, dished eight assists, corralled three rebounds and swiped two steals against Terry.

Add to that Lee's efforts against Arizona State, which Stanford (24-5 overall, 14-2 Pac-10) beat in overtime, 87-77, Thursday, and Lee was named Pac-10 player of the week. The award marked the Cardinal's first such individual honor this season, a testament to the team's outstanding balance.

"It's exciting for two reasons," head coach Mike Montgomery said of Stanford's first league title.

"One is, it's not something that has happened here for a long, long time. In fact, we've never won the Pac-10, per se. So winning that was significant for us. It was something we really wanted to do.

"Two, when it happened at home, you have your seniors [of which Stanford has five] in their last home game, and it's Arizona, which is the team that had a chance to get you, it made it that much more fun for everybody. And I think it was a release of a lot of emotion. Everybody really enjoyed it."

Coaches debate Pac-10 tourney

Arizona head coach Lute Olson has spoken out against the prospects of a Pac-10 postseason tournament in the past, so his opinion that the conference should stick with its regular season-only schedule is not surprising.

However, California head coach Ben Braun's sharing of Olson's sentiments is rather unexpected.

With the Golden Bears (16-10, 7-9) desperately trying to earn a berth in the NCAA Tournament and playing perhaps their best basketball of the season right now, it seems Braun would be lamenting the lack of a postseason tournament.

Especially since all of the NCAA's Division I-A conferences have one — and its prize, an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament — except for the Ivy League and the Pac-10.

But Braun insists the Pac-10 is better off without a tournament.

"I think a tournament would hurt the players because it would take away from their academics at right around finals time and wear teams down physically even more," Braun said.

Braun also said he thought some of the Pac-10's considerable success in the NCAA Tournament recently — one national championship and one Final Four team among eight Sweet 16 appearances in the past two seasons — can be loosely attributed to the absence of a Pac-10 tournament.

Olson said a tournament would

only work if the Pac-10 cut back the regular-season schedule from 18 to 14 games.

"To me, it's idiotic for anyone to play 21 games against conference opponents," Olson said.

When the Pac-10 ran a trial tournament for four seasons from 1986 to 1990, a substantial profit was made only once, Olson pointed out.

"As far as having it this year, yeah, the competition is great, but where are you going to have it?" Olson said. "Our area is spread out from Seattle to Tucson."

From the fans' standpoint, Olson said, he believes the spectators enjoy the Pac-10 season the way it currently is.

"I don't think we have a problem with our fans being excited about [Southern California] and UCLA coming in," Olson said. "I think probably the Oregon fans aren't too disappointed about Stanford and Cal coming up there."

Contrary to popular belief, Olson said he thinks more "bubble" teams get knocked out because of their performance in postseason tournaments than earn an invitation.

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent disagrees with Braun and Olson.

"I think it's sad that don't we have one," Kent said. "We've always talked about the Pac-10 not getting enough respect, the East Coast writers not recognizing us."

"Well, what [is] a better way than having a Pac-10 tournament to add the publicity that we could have late in the year? Particularly with a year like this year with so many close games, the games would be just great."

Opinion



Tim Pyle

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