

# Speaking Skills

Soft-spoken senior forward Alex Scales let's his often-spectacular play do the talking — and it's plenty loud enough

By Tim Pyle  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Reserved is an understatement when describing Alex Scales and his understating demeanor.

Scales, a senior forward on the Oregon men's basketball team, speaks in a soft, low tone that leaves listeners leaning forward to hear. Although he has undeniably opened up compared to the beginning of last season, his first as a Duck after transferring from San Jacinto Community College in Texas, Scales' casual nature still does not incline him to use words liberally.

But put the 6-foot-4, 185-pound native of Racine, Wis., on the basketball court and something happens.

Scales becomes, as head coach Ernie Kent describes him, Oregon's "energy guy."

"When he has his energy high, this team moves at a totally different level," Kent said.

More often than not, that energy manifests itself in the form of a spectacular play by Scales that gets his courtmates pumped, the Duck bench on their feet and, when playing at home, the McArthur Court crowd deafening.

Although Scales' dunks come in a variety of flavors, he does use one form more often than others.

Leaking out after an opponent shoots a jump shot, Scales glides down either sideline to Oregon's offensive end. As the Ducks rebound and find senior point guard Darius Wright, sophomore guard Freddie Jones

or another ballhandler, Scales bides his time in the corner.

In a flash, Scales makes quick eye contact with his ballhandling teammate, streaks down the baseline and elevates. And, oh, how he elevates.

With the lob pass still rising above him, Scales extends and slams home an emphatic basket for Oregon.

Junior guard David Jackson, sidelined lately with a knee injury, described Scales' otherworldly leaps best after a game early in the season.

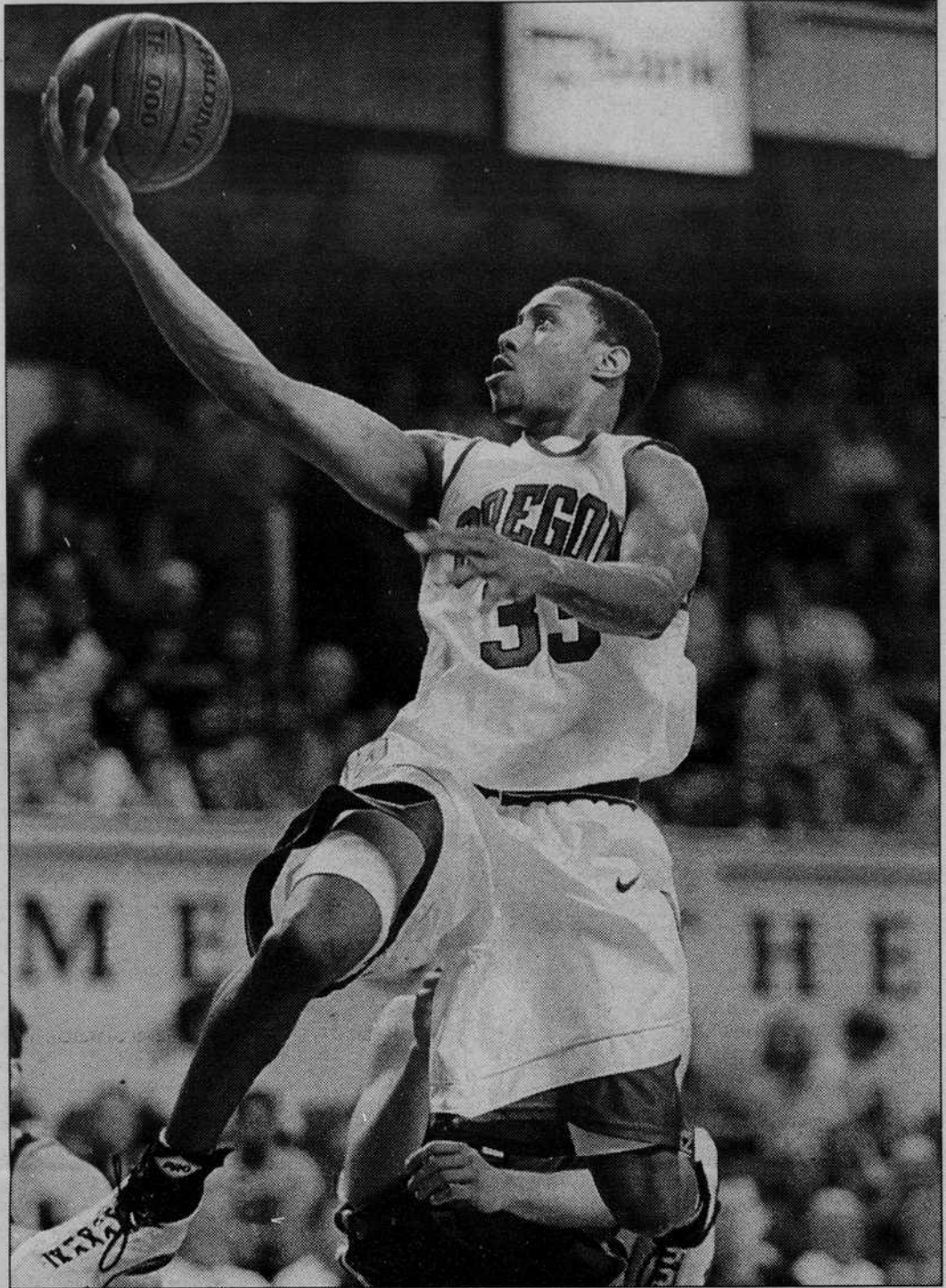
During the Ducks' exhibition win over the California All-Stars, Jackson, moonlighting as the Oregon ballhandler in the aforementioned Scales scenario, tossed a particularly high pass toward the basket. Unfazed, Scales skied and completed the alley-oop.

"No pass is bad with Alex," an awestruck Jackson said afterward. "The guy can jump out of the building."

Such a play may ultimately be worth just two points, but it always means much more to the Ducks in terms that can't be statistically calculated, like emotion. And usually, such an acrobatic alley-oop finish by Scales leads directly to an Oregon run, something that does make a significant impact on the scoreboard.

"He brings to our program what I'd say the other premier programs have in the country," Kent said, "and that's that one guy that has the explosiveness to get out in the open court and get some things done."

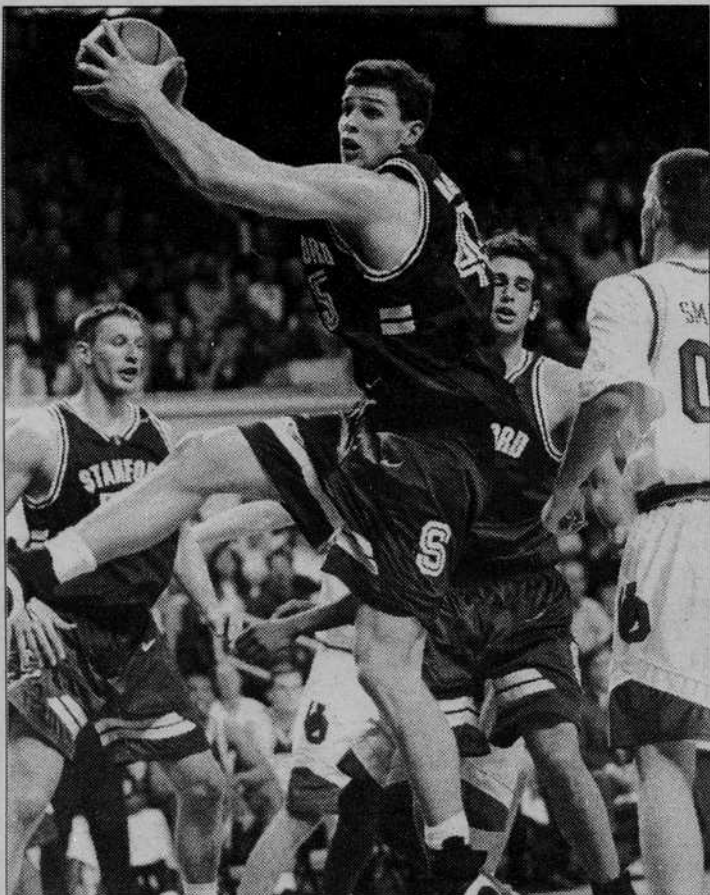
Turn to **Scales**, page 8B



Jeffrey Stockton Emerald

Alex Scales, the Ducks leading scorer last season and second-leading scorer so far this season, is at his best in the open court, where he can use his athleticism on plays such as the above. Scales, however, is also deadly in the half-court, where he strokes jumpers and breaks down opposing defenses.

## Pac-10 strong, but No. 1 Stanford favorite to be strongest



Emerald  
Mark "Mad Dog" Madsen has returned from a hamstring strain and joins his No. 1 Stanford Cardinal in pursuit of Pac-10 and NCAA championships.

### ■ Arizona, Oregon and UCLA should also be NCAA Tournament qualifiers

By Jeff Smith  
Oregon Daily Emerald

From being commonly referred to as the "Pathetic-10 Conference" in football, the men's basketball teams in the league are making a strong case to now be known as the "Powerful-10 Conference."

Or at the very least, the "Powerful-3."

#### 1. Stanford Cardinal (11-0)

Head Coach: Mike Montgomery

Player to Watch: Mark Madsen, F

Outlook: High rankings early on in the season are nothing new to Stanford. A year ago, they entered the season at No. 1 in the Sports Illustrated poll and find themselves in the exact same spot today in both the Associated Press and USA Today/ESPN polls.

And deservedly so.

The Cardinal has marched through the nonconference slate in amazing fashion, especially when you consider that all five of its starters who have played thus

far are first-year starters.

The lone returning starter is, of course Mark Madsen, who has been sidelined much of the year with a hamstring strain and has yet to start a game.

In Madsen's place, 6-11 freshman Curtis Borchardt has opened the eyes of many with his total of 30 blocks in 11 games. Borchardt has helped anchor a defense that has held opponents to just 55.3 points per game and only 31 percent shooting from the field.

In order to fulfill its lofty post-season goals, point guard Michael McDonald must improve upon his 3.5 assists per game average. If he doesn't, it'll be the lowest average for a Stanford starting point guard since 1983-84.

#### 2. Arizona Wildcats (11-2 overall)

Head Coach: Lute Olsen

Player to Watch: Michael Wright, F

Outlook: A year ago, the Wildcats finished second in the Pacific-10 Conference and rolled into the NCAA Tournament with high expectations.

But the 22-6 season record was quickly forgotten as Oklahoma upset them in the first round of the tournament.

Now, however, a youthful Wildcat starting five — which consists of a freshman backcourt, two sophomore forwards and a transfer center — should have enough speed and aggressiveness to take them much deeper in March.

Michael Wright — last season's Pac-10 freshman of the year — is taking on more of a leadership role and is already on pace for an equally, if not more, impressive campaign as a sophomore.

The only downside is that Arizona is still in the fragile process of establishing its bench. Justin Wessel has been productive as a back-up center and forward, and Luke Walton and Rick Anderson have provided occasional offensive sparks but lack the foot speed necessary to run with the Pac-10.

#### 3. Oregon Ducks (9-2)

Head Coach: Ernie Kent

Player to watch: Alex Scales, F

Outlook: The talk started way before the ball was ever tipped up this past fall. It deteriorated a bit when Oregon stumbled in a 79-77 home loss to Cal-State Northridge. But after impressive wins over Wake Forest

Turn to **Men's Pac-10**, page 4B