

Post play

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"There are a lot of individually strong players that you have to take out," said Smith, who was 9 of 15 from the field. "[UCLA guard Jason] Kapon and Moiso are both tough players, and you have to work really hard just to try to contain Moiso."

Ducks coach Ernie Kent made halftime adjustments that frustrated the Bruins' twin towers.

"We came out and double-teamed Moiso in the second half and got him out of his rhythm," Kent said. "We were having them take tough shots and keeping them off the boards. Then we were pounding it inside to Bracey and A.D., and they got into their rhythm."

Smith said the Ducks performed well defensively.

"We had to take them individually, on one-on-one basis," said Smith. "I had to stop Moiso, and I think we did a good job with that."

Oregon started slow in the first half, falling behind 14-4 in the opening minutes before climbing back to cut the deficit to two at halftime.

"At the start of the game, I was thinking we had to start defending," Bracey said. "We had to start playing with some energy."

Bracey — who provided Oregon with needed energy in the Ducks comeback with seven first-half points off the bench — emphasized the importance of the game being close at halftime.

"We didn't want them to go in at halftime thinking they could win," Bracey said. "It gave us a lot of confidence knowing that we came back from being down a lot."

Smith said the teams' attitude was positive at the half.

"We felt pretty good about things and that we could come back," Smith said. "We came out strong in the second half."

To begin the half, Kent opted to start Bracey in place of Flo Hartenstein. The move definitely paid off, as Smith and Bracey

pushed the Ducks to an overwhelming 18-0 run.

Smith said he was unaware Oregon put together such a huge of run.

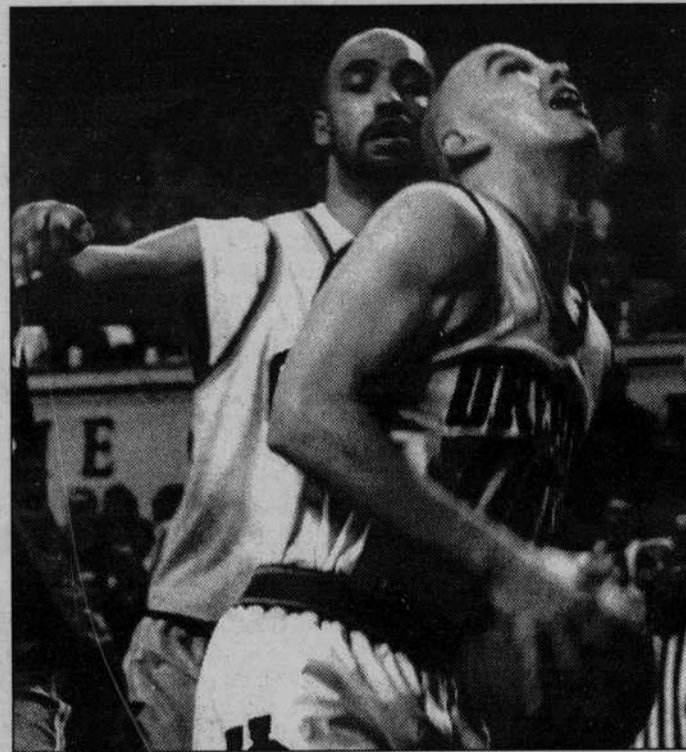
"The 18-0 run is news to me," Smith said. "I knew we put a pretty good run on them. It went from being tight to putting it away with four to five minutes to go. I didn't know we held them scoreless for that long. That means our defense did a pretty nice job."

Kent was impressed with Smith and Bracey's rebounding during the pivotal run.

"If you're holding them without a score for that long, you're doing a pretty good job on the boards," Kent said.

The Bruins were rattled in McArthur Court, a sign that Smith said points to their youth.

"In this conference, there aren't many senior-led teams," Smith said. "We're really one of the only ones. There are a lot of freshmen and sophomores out there, and our crowd can really take advantage of that."



Michael Crisp Emerald

A.D. Smith is glad the Ducks won in a blowout, not another last-minute affair.

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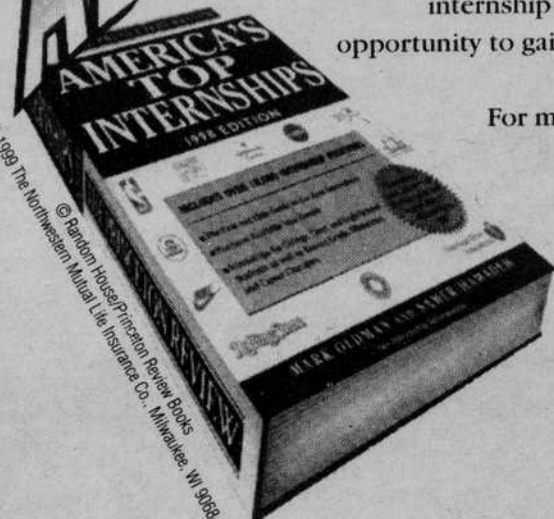
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Basketball

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tie for first place with Arizona, Southern California and Stanford. Its 6-1 league record is the program's best start ever and will likely give the Ducks their first top-25 ranking of the year.

"I'm just glad that we finally have the opportunity to gain the respect that we deserve nationally," Bracey said. "We've always been a good team, but we haven't always played up to our potential."

Like in the first 15 minutes of the game when UCLA came out as the aggressors. But Oregon head coach Ernie Kent knew this was a war and got his troops to fight.

With six minutes and 29 seconds remaining in the first half, Kent's team trailed the visiting UCLA Bruins by a score of 23-13. Kent quickly dispersed of his jacket — an action he usually waits to do until at least the second half.

Once the jacket was lost, the Ducks went on to outscore the Bruins 16-8 to cut the lead to 31-29 at the half. It was Kent's belief in his team that helped the players overcome their sluggish start.

"He was pretty happy with the comeback that we had," said senior forward A.D. Smith. "We didn't start too well, but we still felt pretty good about things. We knew we had a good chance to come back and pick things up in the second half, and fortunately that's what happened."

Players and coaches agreed that one of the biggest reasons for the comeback was the effect that the crowd had. But Kent noted that, early on, the energetic fans may have played in UCLA's favor.

"We talked prior to the game that this crowd was going to elevate UCLA's game because their players were so hyped up," Kent said. "But as the reality of the game took shape, the crowd really worked to our advantage. It was the Mac Court of old."

The crowd was at its loudest during a pivotal stretch in the second half that saw momentum completely switch in favor of the Ducks.

UCLA's Jason Kapon drilled a three with 11:53 to go, giving the Bruins the 40-39 advantage, and seemingly, the confidence to battle the Ducks right to the end.

But in the ensuing 6 1/2 minutes, senior point guard Darius Wright and the Ducks dominated all phases of the game — holding the Bruins scoreless on 10 straight

possessions — en route to an 18-0 run that put the game on ice.

It was he who immediately followed Kapon's three with a three of his own to ignite the rally and give Oregon a two-point lead that it wouldn't relinquish.

It was he who launched a beautiful full-court pass to a streaking Alex Scales for the up-and-under reverse lay-in.

It was his three-pointer with 9:34 to go gave the Ducks an 11-point advantage and really took the crowd to an insane level.

And finally, it was he who capped the rally with a perfectly placed alley-oop pass to Freddie Jones, who threw it down for the emphatic exclamation point.

"We talk about him a lot because he is the guy that energizes us," said Kent of his point guard that finished with nine assists. "Darius moved over to the shooting guard spot and gave us an opportunity to extend the court and open this thing up. He stabilized the floor for us."

But in Wright's usual passive demeanor, he dished credit to everyone but himself.

"Coach told me to get open looks and step up and knock them down," said Wright, whose three three-pointers were the Ducks only ones out of 15 attempts. "Guys set some good screens, and they found me. I just happened to hit the shots."

Other players who hit shots for Oregon were Smith with 18 points, junior forward Bryan Bracey with 16 points and senior forward Scales with 14 points.

Scales and Bracey also contributed a combined 14 free throws as Oregon (20-24) outshot the Bruins (4-6) from the line.

All of this helped Oregon win the war Saturday night, but just like in the pregame huddles, Oregon wouldn't be had.

Following the game, it could loudly be heard that this loss broke the Bruins' backs. In a closed-doors tirade, Bruin head coach Steve Lavin criticized and senior Sean Farnham berated.

Farnham, who had zero points in one minute of action, was heard yelling — while pounding his fist into the wall — "I'm not going out like this! I'm not going to the NIT!"

On the other side of the spectrum, Oregon players were all smiles.

"Tonight was a lot of fun," Jones said. "Our crowd was super and really made it exciting. Now it's time to take the show on the road."