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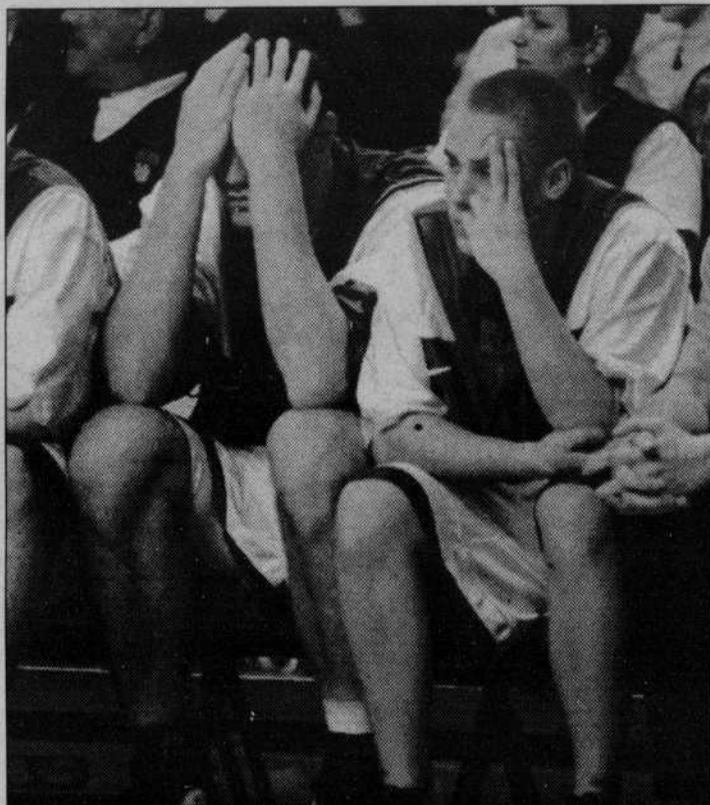
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Chris Christoffersen and Kristian Christensen react with disappointment and dissatisfaction as the clock winds down in Oregon's loss against Washington.

Basketball

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against the Ducks gave the Huskies their most road wins in a season since 1986.

"We've been good on the road," said Washington head coach Bob Bender, who has led the Huskies to the NCAA Tournament the last two years. "It's my responsibility to make us better at home. Now we got three straight home games before we finish up on the road, so I'm anxious to see how we respond."

Oregon sealed its own fate in the second half, shooting poorly from the field and the line (61.8 percent). The Ducks' poor shooting allowed Washington to calmly erase Oregon's eight point half-time lead and left Oregon scraping its way back into the game during the waning moments.

With two minutes left and down 58-53, it appeared that Oregon guard Alex Scales might pull out some Mac Court magic following his dunk and ensuing free throw, which cut the Washington lead to two.

That's when the Huskies delivered the play of the game, a touch pass from guard Bryan Brown to a wide-open Thalo Green under the basket. Oregon forward A.D. Smith was too late recovering, and Green scored despite being fouled. His free throw gave Washington a lead that proved to be too large for Oregon to overcome.

"We got doubled, but that's okay," Bender said. "We want to be doubled so we can find the open man, and we found the open man that obviously completed the play. That's the difference in a close game like this."

Green — who played prep basketball at South Salem and led the Saxons to a state championship in 1996 — has had some of his best collegiate games during his returns to his native state. Last sea-

son, he scored 13 points against both Oregon and Oregon State, and on Saturday he was the Huskies' leading scorer with 16 points on 6-of-10 shooting.

Green admits he enjoys the atmosphere when he comes back to Oregon.

"This is a great place to play, and they have a great crowd," Green said. "Oregon's a great basketball team, and this was a character win for us."

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said the mental instability of his team was the main reason the Ducks were unable to play to their potential.

"I don't want to make excuses, but this team was mentally fatigued," Kent said. "We were just a flat basketball team. A lot of point-blank shots were made by a lot of good shooters."

In the early moments, Oregon looked as if it was going to blow the game wide open. After a three-

“Oregon's a great basketball team, and this was a character win for us.”

Thalo Green
 Washington forward

pointer and a jump shot from Scales, the Ducks had a 7-0 lead. Luckily, the overzealous student section refrained from declaring a win was set in stone.

It didn't take long for the Huskies to tie the game after intermission. Washington guard Deon Lutton knotted the score with a jump shot at the 14:00 mark, and the Huskies never looked back. Green extended Washington's lead to 51-43 on his jump shot with just over six minutes left and from then on, the Ducks never got closer than a two-point deficit.

Jeff Smith

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back in the game."

And when Smith's misses turned into Washington possessions, the go-to guy was usually Green, who got the job done in A.D. Smith-like fashion. He found ways to put the ball in the hole in not-so spectacular plays. He finished with a game-high 16 points and eight rebounds and converted the play that broke the Ducks' backs.

Alex Scales converted a free throw to cut the Husky lead to 58-56 with one minute and 24 seconds remaining. The Pit was finally rocking, and the Oregon defense was running wild. But they doubled up on Washington guard Bryan Brown, leaving Green wide-open underneath the basket.

With the Oregon defense failing to rotate, Brown touch-passed it to Green who banked in the layup. To make matters worse, Smith fouled him, and Green drained the free throw to convert the three-point play to give the Huskies the 61-56 advantage with 56 seconds left.

"That's Thalo at his best," Washington head coach Bob Bender said. "He can do that all the time. He just keeps things so simple, and it's just a matter of being consistent."

"I think there's a great comparison with him and A.D. Smith. They are a great testament to guys who keep it simple and make a difference."

The similarities run deep. Smith was the 1995 Oregon high school player of the year while at Churchill.

Green was the 1996 Oregon high school player of the year

while at South Salem.

Both were forced to red-shirt the 1996-97 college season due to injuries.

They are close in height and weight, and play the game with the same amount of passion and importance on the basic fundamentals.

So it is not surprising that both speak so highly of each other.

"You have to focus on A.D. 'cause he's such a smart player," Green said. "We've matched up against each other plenty of times in the past and I enjoy playing against the guy because he's such a great player."

"I've known Thalo a long time, and he's a good player," Smith said. "He works hard and is a big reason that they had success tonight. He did a good job defensively and he's done a nice job for them for the last couple of years when they went to the [NCAA] tournament."

It is safely assumed that when March 12 rolls around, it will be the Ducks who will be granted with an NCAA tourney berth. And it will be the Huskies who will be forced to sit at home and observe for the first time in three years.

But on this one night, none of that mattered.

Smith sat there in the corner of the media room, shaking his head slowly in frustration.

While Green — with his curly red hair dripping sweat onto his nose — soaked up the feeling of stealing a win in his home state.

March Madness may be in the future for Smith.

But at this exact moment in time, Green was enjoying the present.

Jeff Smith is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

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