

Women

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need to take care of business and get the win [today] to move ourselves up in the eyes of the committee."

But in the midst of all the title excitement, the Ducks don't want to get too excited — not yet.

"I can guarantee that there is nobody who would want to spoil it more for us than Oregon State," point guard Shaquala Williams said. "They want to beat us more than anybody, and they would love to spoil it for us."

Tonight is senior night, also known this season as "Nicole Night." Guard Nicole Strange will step onto Mac Court's hardwood for the last time as a Duck.

The Ducks may not have made it this far without Strange's contributions. She is arguably the Pac-10's best midrange shooter, hitting 50.5 percent from the field this season.

"We want to give her the best opportunity to go out as a winner and to go out as a Pac-10 champ in her last game at Mac Court," Williams said. "I think it's really important to her, and I think it's really important to us as a team for her to get that opportunity."

Although Oregon is vying for the all-out title, this season has been anything but a smooth ride.

The wear-and-tear of a long road trip eventually dumped the Ducks

from the nation's top-25 early on.

Recurring injuries to junior forward Lindsey Dion left Oregon with one of its most dependable players playing at less than full-go.

Two homecourt losses, including the Ducks' loss to Southern California two weeks ago, tossed Oregon from first place in the conference and tainted the Ducks' usually dominant ways at home.

Most recently, Oregon was down in Tucson, 55-33, with the second half flying by and the Pac-10 title hopes seemingly slipping away — but the Ducks' mounted a heroic comeback to eke out the victory.

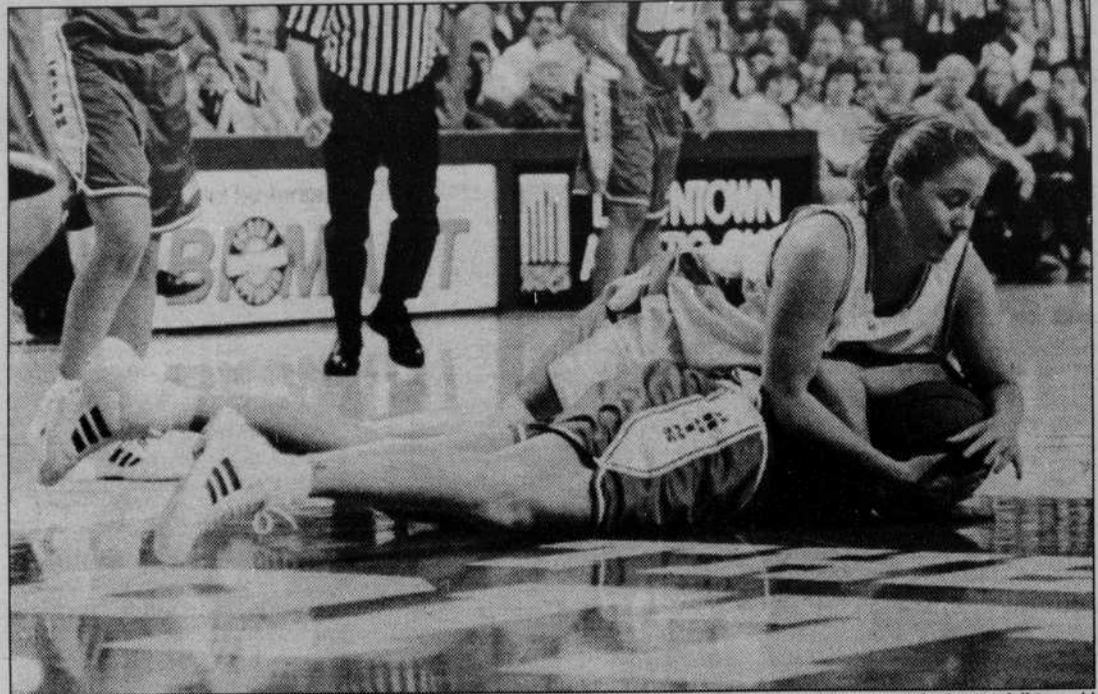
Now, after a storied season of Pac-10 parity, Oregon sits atop the pack, the all-out title within its grasp.

Just one team stands in the way.

Before the season, any Pac-10 contender would have welcomed Oregon State with title hopes on the line.

Led by seniors Sissel Pierce and Reda Petraitis, however, the Beavers have beaten all their critics. Oregon State is fifth in the conference — not eighth, as pre-season polls projected it would finish — and it is among the top-four teams in each of the conference's statistical categories.

Oregon head coach Jody Runge said this could be the greatest game at McArthur Court all year. Obviously the fans agree — as of Thursday, every general admission ticket was sold, and there were 400 reserve tickets left.



Catharine Kendall Emerald

The Ducks want to win for senior Nicole Strange, who possibly plays her last game at McArthur Court.

Assistant coach Fred Litzenberg agreed that this game is special.

"We always talk about having to take one game at a time," Litzenberg said. "It's funny because here it is; it comes down to one game."

"We want to stay focused on it being just one game, but obviously there's a lot riding on this game."

The season's first Civil War in Corvallis was won by Oregon, but the Ducks didn't pull away from the Beavers until late in the second half. The game's high intensity set an up-tempo pace riddled with lots of contact and few calls.

And, of course, there's forward/center Ericka Cook, who started the war in Corvallis early by flipping off Oregon's Dion in a

back hallway.

In the words of Dion, the rematch should be "electrifying."

"It's going to be an awesome atmosphere at Mac Court and we want to send Nicole out with a bang," Dion said. And [Oregon State is] not playing half bad right now. They're young, they're excited and they're going to bring it."

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (March 10). You might have to make some tough choices this year, but that's good. A difficult situation could force you to give up a bad habit. Don't argue too much in March, especially in a fight you don't really want to win. Don't spend the money before you get it in April. In May, you're lucky — and decisive, too. Make an important choice then. Creative work brings in the bucks around August. A new opportunity requires new skills in December. New information threatens old beliefs in February, but faith prevails.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) — Today is a 7 — Remember to stick to a budget. Even if you feel like there's plenty, don't be extravagant. You'll be wiser to save than to spend. Pay back what you owe, too. Be generous with your time and ideas, instead.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Today is a 7 — The framework you've set in place should work well for you. Your experience pays off, too. You're a practical, common sense kind of a person. Don't go for a fanciful scheme. It won't work. A night on the town with your friends? That's a go!

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) — Today is a 7 — To achieve a goal, stick to the old-fashioned rules. A person you promised will remember what you said you'd do. If you know that ahead of time and if you remember not to push against the limits, your life will be much easier.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) — Today is an 8 — The people in your inner circle are important to you. They provide comfort, security and all sorts of things you might not have realized you get from them. So, pass those feelings along to somebody else. Be the strong one for a friend who's feeling a little wobbly.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — Today is a 6 — A boss is a stickler for rules and regulations today. He or she is not going to be flexible. Well, the truth is your latest idea might not work anyway. If somebody tells you there isn't enough money, it might be true. Take care.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — Today is an 8 — Have you thought about going back to

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130 CARS/TRUCKS

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