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Civil War

continued from page 7A

is sophomore guard Freddie Jones, who exploded for a career-high 27 points in Saturday's win over Arizona. He is confident that his team will rally around them.

"We gotta play hard for these seniors," Jones said. "The important thing for us right now is that they end their careers on a high note. I know all of the underclassmen are going to look forward to try to make that come true."

The Ducks, who have won 12 of the last 13 Civil War meetings, will not be facing the same Beaver team that they encountered in Corvallis on Jan. 8 when the Ducks blasted Oregon State 67-49.

On the same night that Oregon upended Arizona State 76-74, the Beavers had a big win themselves. Deaundra Tanner's three-pointer at the buzzer propelled Oregon State to a 70-69 overtime upset over then-No. 3 ranked Arizona.

At the time, the win bolstered Beaver hopes of a NIT bid, but a 77-74 overtime loss to Arizona State two nights later ended such talk.

Oregon State head coach Eddie Payne admitted that the loss was a demoralizing one to his team, but does not expect a letdown this Saturday.

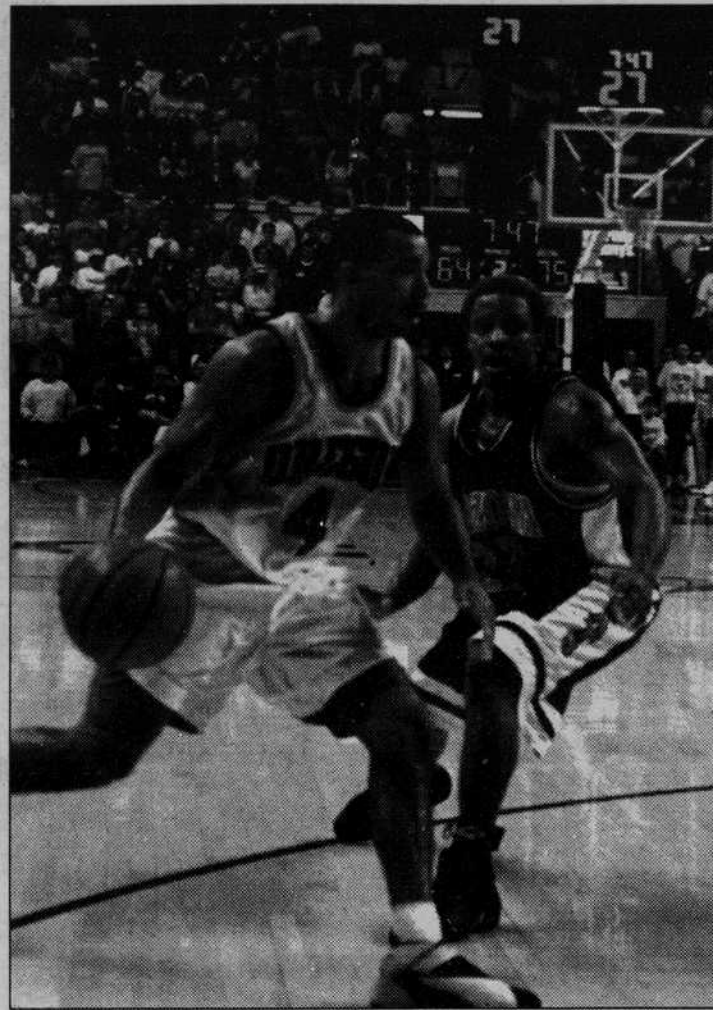
The loss "was still lingering in practice," Payne said. "But by Saturday, I think everyone will be focused. With the excitement of Mac Court and playing Oregon, I don't think they can hold back."

The Beavers are led by junior guard Tanner, who averages a team-high 14 points and 5.1 assists per game. In the teams' first meeting, Tanner scored 10 points but was held to three for 12 from the field.

"He's a great player and is their No. 1 option," Wright said. "It's just another challenge for me to try to stop somebody."

Wright doesn't quite know how to feel about his Mac Court finale with his senior counterparts.

"It's mixed emotions," said Wright said. "It's going to be our last game here; [we're] coming to the end of our career. On the same note,



Ryan Starkweather Emerald
 Senior point guard Darius Wright will lead his team for the final time at the Pit this Saturday against Deaundra Tanner and the Beavers.

we gotta be happy because we're going to postseason play."

Even though the matchup with the Beavers is obviously the first priority, the Oregon athletic staff has put together a NCAA Tournament Selection Party this Sunday at Mac Court.

Duck fans are encouraged to attend this free event and watch the live selection on three giant, 14-foot big-screen TVs. The doors will open at 1:45 p.m., and the women's selection show will be seen at 2. At 2:30, the main program will take place, featuring an on-court program featuring the team, the band, the mascot and the cheerleaders.

There also will be a video highlight of the season, and many contests and prizes for those in attendance — with everyone receiving at least a voucher for a free gift. Then at 3:30, Oregon will find out where it's going and who it's playing when the selection show is aired live.

First things first, however, because the Beavers await.

"For us seniors, it's our last chance to get out there and have a little fun," Smith said.

"It's Oregon State, which makes it even easier to get up for. It's definitely a game we're not taking lightly."

Mariners tell fans: Rodriguez will stay

By Jim Cour
 The Associated Press

PEORIA, Ariz. — Hoping to draw 3 million fans in their first full season at Safeco Field, the Seattle Mariners made the only decision they thought they could make on Alex Rodriguez.

"I am convinced that the best way to win in 2000 is for Alex to be a Mariner," new Mariners Chairman Howard Lincoln said this week in announcing that the team will not trade its three-time All-Star shortstop.

In the end, the Mariners decided they could not take another major public relations hit in losing its third franchise player in less than two years.

On Feb. 10, the Mariners were forced to trade Ken Griffey Jr. to Cincinnati because they knew he would be a major distraction in the clubhouse this season after he told them he wanted out of Seattle before the final year of his contract.

On March 31, 1998, the Mariners traded the best pitcher in their history, Randy Johnson, to Houston on the final day of the trading deadline after they decided they would not give him a new contract.

Rodriguez, who might be baseball's best player at 24, is expected to opt out of Seattle. Officially,

he says he'll make up his mind at the end of the season. Unofficially, his mind probably is made up because he knows could become a bigger star in a bigger media market and he is not a fan of Seattle's new outdoor stadium which he considers unfair to hitters.

The team that eventually lands Rodriguez could have to offer up as much as a \$200 million, 10-year contract — much more than it cost the Reds to sign Griffey to a \$116.5 million, nine-year deal.

The Mariners got Brett Tomko, Mike Cameron, Jake Meyer and Antonio Perez for Griffey. If Rodriguez departs, as expected, they won't get that much, only draft choices.

Still, they decided that bringing Rodriguez back for what could be his final season in Seattle was the only choice because of their fans and their reeling national image as a team that can't keep its best players.

The Mariners' ownership and front office are feeling the pressure: They must win the AL West this season.

"I am absolutely confident that not only his talents on the field, but his leadership ability, will bring the American League West championship to Seattle this year," Lincoln said.