

Men's

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in an NBA arena against a high-profile opponent.

"Yeah, we're really excited about that," said senior forward Bryan Bracey, who was one of the many frustrated Ducks Tuesday after he scored only nine points. "I think we're going to rise to the occasion. I think we're going to play a lot better against better competition."

“The good thing about the UMass game is that, win or lose, it's going to make us a better basketball team.”

Ernie Kent
Oregon head coach

Certainly the Minutemen qualify as being a bigger name than Portland, Denver and Mississippi Valley State, but they haven't exactly been tearing it up lately. Hopes were high for UMass heading into the season, but so far, it is just 1-2 with its only win being a 67-65 season-opening squeaker against Iona.

After that, the Minutemen stumbled in a loss to Marquette, 68-64, and then fell on their faces against the Patriot League's Holy Cross, 78-65. In that game, Holy Cross outrebounded UMass 52-30.

"We're not making any moves under the basket — we're just standing behind guys and pushing them in the back," UMass head coach Bruiser Flint told

CNN.com.

A key for the Ducks will be containing senior guard Monty Mack. Mack averaged 19.8 points per game last season and is the Minutemen's go-to guy down the stretch. However, he has struggled since missing time with an ankle injury and has missed 22 of his first 30 shots of the season.

On the Oregon side, Kent will be expecting his go-to guys, junior guard Freddie Jones and Bracey, to be at the top of their games. According to Bracey, after Tuesday's game, Kent told both him and Jones that "they were nowhere to be found."

"Freddie and Bracey need to make sure, night in and night out, that they have their A game," Kent said. "And if the freshmen can bring their C-plus and B game, then we're going to be OK. But those two guys have got to be locked in every night."

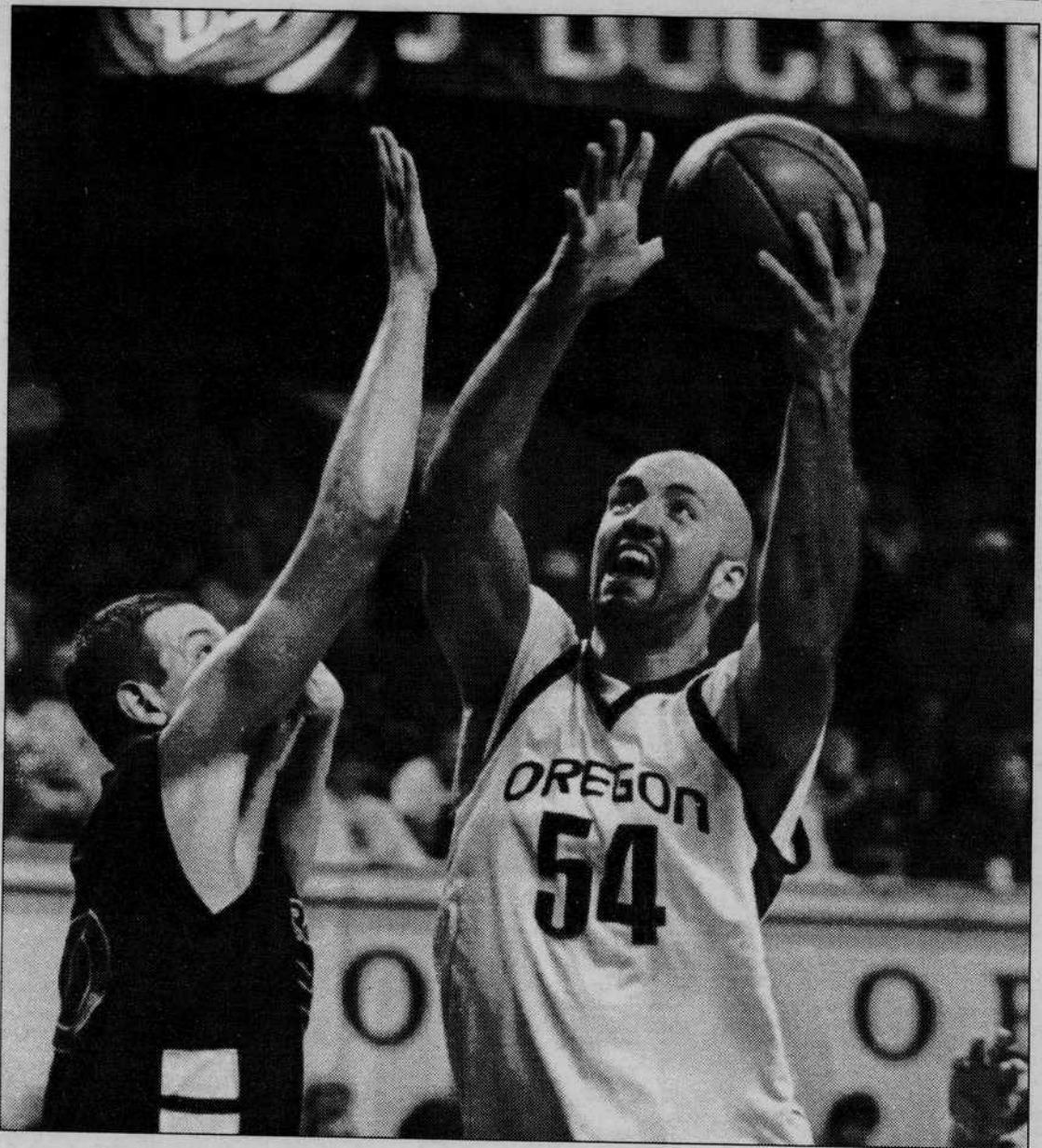
If the game is close, the Ducks should have the edge, as they are 17-5 in the last 22 games that were decided by seven points or fewer.

Saturday's game will provide Oregon with the perfect chance for personal redemption and also to make an early season statement.

"We know we can do it," freshman point guard Luke Ridnour said. "We have confidence in ourselves. We just have to come out and get it done on the floor."

"The good thing about the UMass game is that, win or lose, it's going to make us a better basketball team," Kent said.

The third annual Papé Jam will begin at 6 p.m. with the Oregon women's game, which will be followed by the Oregon men's game at 8:30 p.m. It will be televised by the Oregon Sports Network.



Oregon senior Flo Hartenstein has recovered from knee surgery and is beginning to become more of a force down low. Adam Amatto Emerald

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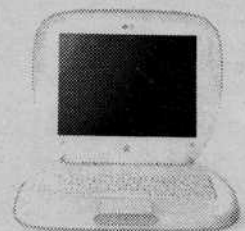
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