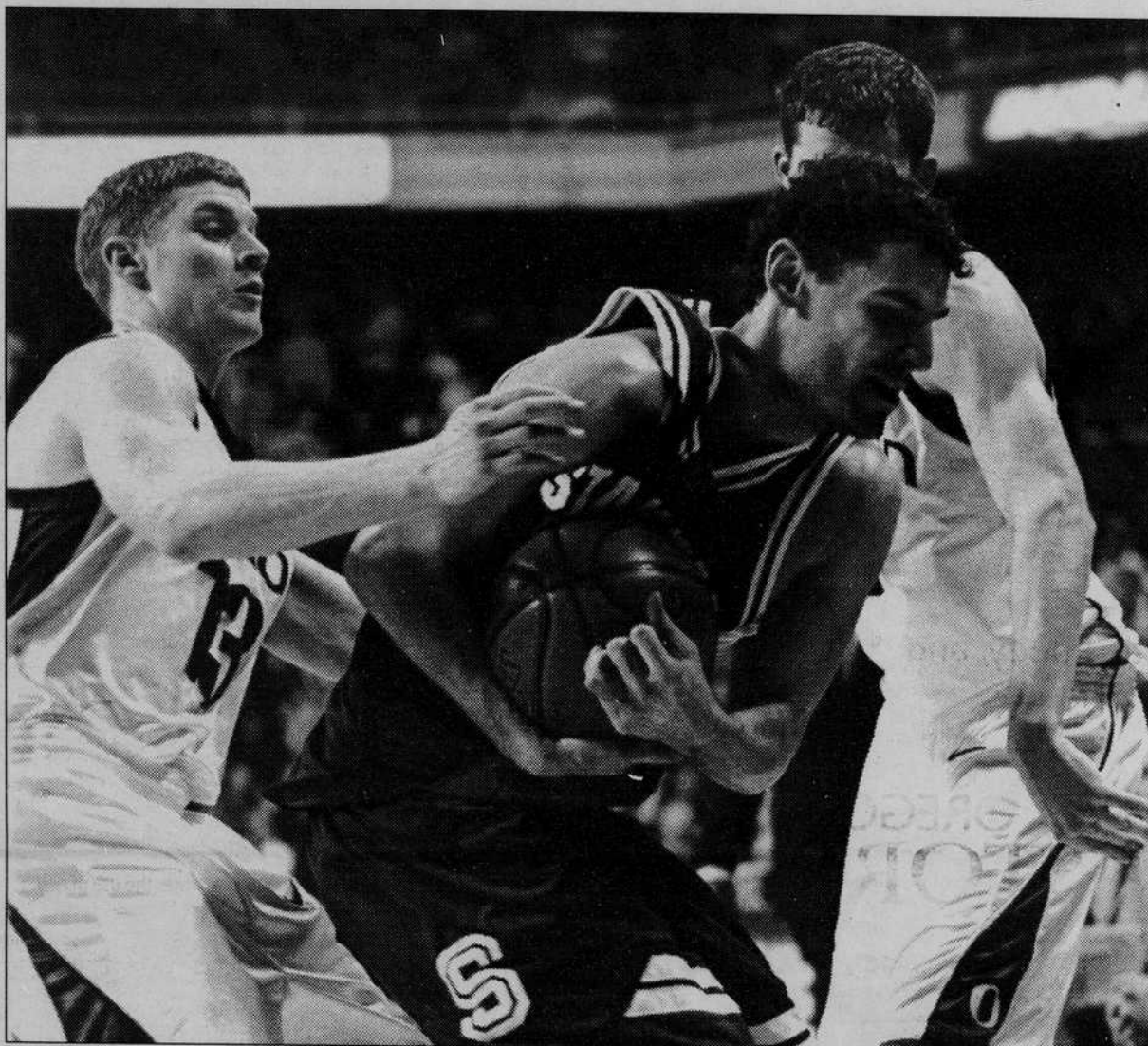




Ducks play Cardinal tough, fall just short



Stanford's Ryan Mendez is fouled by Luke Ridnour (left) late in Thursday night's 69-62 Cardinal victory. Mendez made six late free throws.

Katie Miller Emerald

■ Stanford turns it on late and goes on a 13-0 run to overcome an energetic Oregon team

By Jeff Smith

Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon's bid for another upset victory began with an Anthony Norwood first half three-pointer, and ended with a touch foul by Chris Christoffersen in the second half that fouled the center out of the game.



During the 26 minutes in between those two events, the Ducks outscored the second-ranked Stanford Cardinal 49-31, to take a 56-49 lead with only 6:10 to play.

But once Christoffersen went down, Stanford exploited Oregon's inside game and went on a 13-0 run that broke the Ducks' back. The late-game dominance helped seal the Cardinal's 69-62 win in front of an energized, sold-out crowd of 9,087 at McArthur Court Thursday night.

"We were in position to win against the No. 2 team," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "That tells me a lot about us. We battled hard and left it all out on the court."

Stanford (21-1 overall, 9-1 Pacific-10 Conference), which beat Oregon for the 10th consecutive time, was led by center Jason Collins with 19 points and 11 rebounds. Oregon (12-8, 3-7) was paced by Bryan Bracey with 15 and Freddie Jones with 12.

"They just went on a big run, and we went stagnant on offense," Bracey said. "We played our hearts out. We just didn't get any breaks."

The Ducks knew that defense would be the key to this game, and didn't want to use their foul trouble and the officiating as an excuse. Besides Christoffersen's late-game absence, the Ducks were also without center Julius Hicks, who fouled out with 8:35 remaining.

The most glaring statistic was that Stanford attempted 37 foul shots compared with Oregon's 7.

"You can't look and say that the officiating took the game away," Kent said. "Defense was the key. We just didn't defend in that key stretch at the end. When we got down early, it was defense that got us back in the game."

In the beginning, it appeared as though Stanford could run away with the game after taking an early 18-7 lead. But then came Norwood's three-pointer at the 12:31 mark of the first half, followed by a Bracey trey and a Jones layin to cut it to 18-15 and breathe realistic hope into the crowd and the Ducks.

From there, the game turned into a competitive, hard-nosed battle with no team taking more than a five-point lead until Oregon's seven-point advantage with 6:10 to play.

"This is a tough place to play, and Oregon was very well prepared," Stanford head coach Mike Montgomery said. "The game went as we expected it to. They had us down late and really forced us to dig down."

The Ducks were only down 63-60 with less than a minute left, but couldn't convert on their chances. They were then forced to foul Stanford sharpshooter Ryan Mendez three times, and he drilled all six free throws to help his team capture the win.

This was definitely a different Oregon team than the

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UO champions for a few minutes



TWO MINUTES FOR CROSS-CHECKING

PETER HOCKADAY

Words cannot describe the emotions that ran through McArthur Court Thursday night.

I'm drained, and I'm just a reporter. Yes, the Ducks lost, 69-62, to No. 2 Stanford. But it was quite possibly the most magical loss in the two seasons of Oregon basketball that I have witnessed.

Forget the rest of the season. Forget what this game means in "the big picture," or where the Ducks stand as a team following this game. For a few moments Thursday, the Ducks were kings.

With 6:56 left in the game, a media time-out was called.

Right then, right there, was a moment the Ducks should have taken a snapshot

of so they could pull it out of the wallet whenever times got tough.

Oregon was playing unselfish, exciting basketball. The Ducks were denying Stanford's big men, confusing its shooters and hitting their own shots with an extra flourish.

Surely, the Oregon players must have realized then that they were at the peak of their game. Mac Court was rocking. The fans hoped, prayed and screamed for a miracle that wasn't going to happen.

of not having won some games in awhile."

A win would have moved the Ducks (12-8 overall, 5-5 Pacific-10 Conference) into a tie with Arizona for fourth place. Instead, Oregon — loser of five of its last six games — remains in fifth, but is now tied with California. The Golden Bears pulled away from Oregon State, winning 72-60.

Now, the Ducks face a bitter reality: Unless some upsets occur at the top of the heap, the conference title is almost out of reach.

"We know we can still do it; that's not out of the question," point guard Kourtney Shreve said.

"But right now, we're just trying to take one game at a time and make it easier on ourselves, instead of looking ahead at the end of the season."

During the week building up to Thursday's game against Stanford, the Ducks talked more about playing together as a cohesive unit, rather than focusing attention on last season's humiliating 78-62 loss at Maples.

Oregon did play better than it has in recent games. And, at the same time, the Ducks came within minutes of staging a comeback victory of their own.

Backup point guard Alissa Ed-

wards hit a three-pointer with less than three minutes remaining, cutting Stanford's lead to 50-49 after the Ducks trailed by 11 early in the second half.

But Cardinal sharpshooter Lauren St. Clair stepped up and hit two three-pointers, sparking an 8-0 Stanford scoring run and putting the game out of reach.

"It was a tough loss, but the good thing is we are improving, we're playing more as a team — that's really helpful — and everybody's starting to click a little better," Shreve said. "We're slowly improving; hopefully we'll get

Turn to Women, page 8A

The Cardinal beat the Duck women at Maples Pavilion for the 14th straight time

By Scott Pesznecker
Oregon Daily Emerald

The final score of Oregon's heated matchup with Stanford was 63-54, identical to what the Maples Pavilion scoreboard read on March 5, 1987 — the last time the Ducks ousted the Cardinal on its home floor.

But unlike that fateful day 14 years ago, the scoreboard wasn't in the Oregon women's basketball team's favor.

"They gave us an opportunity to get back in it, and we just couldn't hit shots," head coach Jody Runge told KSCR-radio. "That's just part of playing on the road, and it's part



SHREVE