



## The Dane that reigns

After two frustrating years, Chris Christoffersen is finally making an impact

By Jeff Smith  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The elevator ride was quiet, but the fear was as loud as can be.

In one corner stood a young, innocent freshman girl who shakily pressed the button for floor No. 7, the top floor of the University Inn, obeying the two mammoth hands that held up seven fingers behind her.

It was the fall of 1998, and the girl kept looking up at this 7-foot-2, stone-faced figure as if wondering where he came from.

And then, the two made eye contact, and the intimidating man spoke:

"Boo!"

The girl let out a frightened yelp, but before her knees could buckle, she was comforted by the larger-than-life man who allowed his hiding smile and engaging personality to come out.

The girl laughed, waited for the doors to open to her fifth floor, and said, "You scared me."

The playful first-year college man from Roenne, Denmark, laughed back and replied, "Didn't mean to. Have a good day."

### Kind vs. confident

There have always been two sides to Oregon junior center Chris Christoffersen.

The only problem for him was that, until recently, he had not revealed the side that made that freshman girl shake in her boots back then.

Instead, for the first two years of his college life, Christoffersen demonstrated that "teddy bear-like quality," as his head coach, Ernie Kent put it. And in the fierce, competitive world of Pacific-10 Conference basketball, stuffed animals don't cut it.

"He's an extremely nice young man, and sometimes to a fault," Kent said.

So, there Christoffersen sat, on the bench, throughout much of his freshman and sophomore campaigns.

"One of my main problems was that I've never been down or really upset about not playing," said Christoffersen, who will be a major factor in tonight's 7 p.m. tilt with UCLA at McArthur Court. "Cause I felt like I was accepting my role and sitting on the bench, and I got in this comfort zone of just going through the motions and not really contributing to the team."

"And then at the start of this season, it hit me. I'm a junior. This is embarrassing. I've been here for two years, and I need to do something to help out."

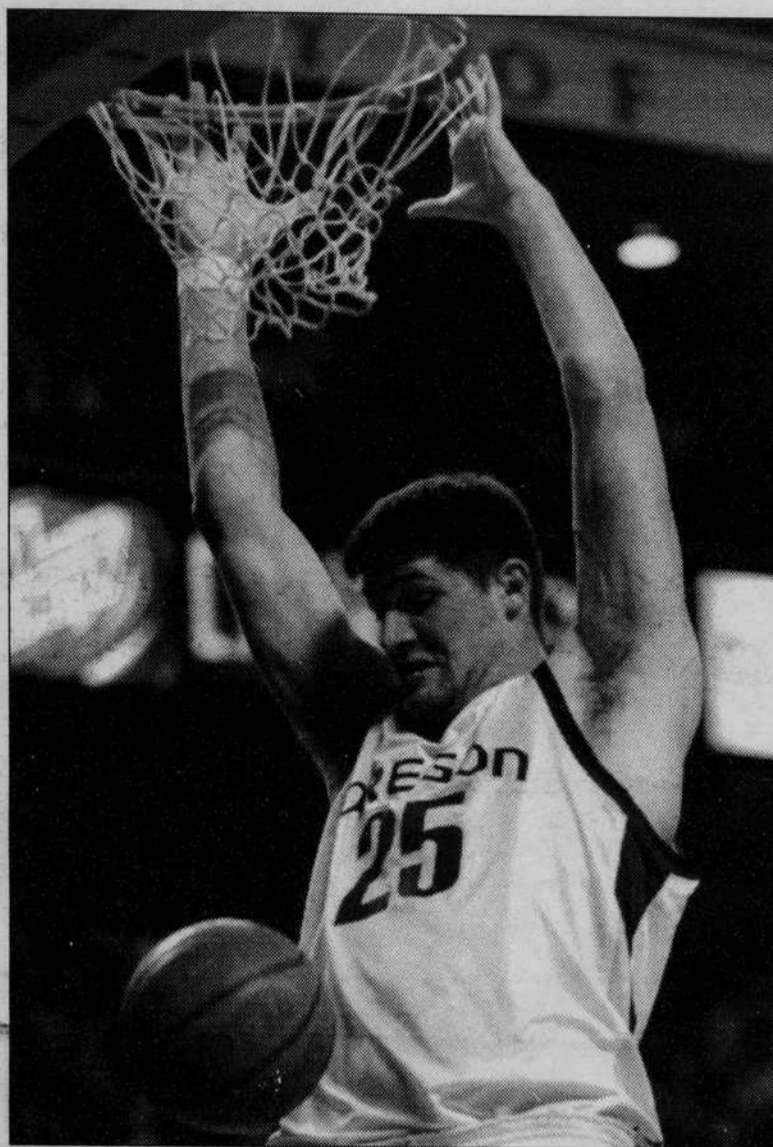
With that mentality set, all Christoffersen needed was a confidence boost, and he got just that during Oregon's 88-65 road victory against Louisville on Dec. 30. Christoffersen's stats that game were not earth-shattering: five points, seven rebounds and one blocked shot in 17 minutes of play.

But during a seemingly normal moment in the first half, the Christoffersen that everyone had hoped to see finally emerged.

"I went up aggressively and pulled down the rebound and then just stared this [Louisville] guy down," Christoffersen said. "That was the turning point because I just gained so much confidence after that one play."

"I said, 'You know what, I can actually play with these guys.'"

Christoffersen, or "Big Chris" as he's commonly referred to, slowly began to Turn to Christoffersen, page 12A



Adam Amato Emerald

Oregon 7-foot-2 junior center Chris Christoffersen is used to looking down on people in real life, but this season he has been doing more of it on the basketball court as well.

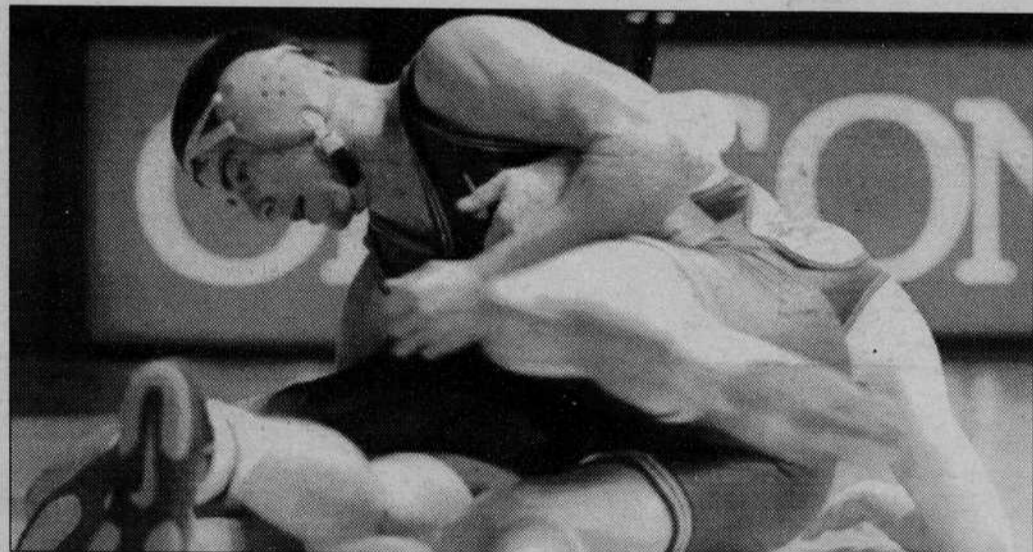
### OnTap

Who: Oregon vs. UCLA

When: Tonight at 7 p.m.

Where: McArthur Court

TV: Oregon Sports Network



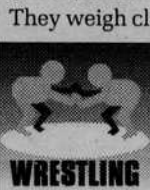
Azle Malinao-Alvarez Emerald

Junior Leif Williams has wrestled everywhere from 157 to 174 pounds so far in his career with the Oregon Ducks.

## Williams, Larkin filling UO's holes

Junior Leif Williams and freshman Luke Larwin put in extra effort for the Ducks to fill out a thin lineup

By Robbie McCallum  
Oregon Daily Emerald



They weigh close to 160 pounds, and each week they wrestle opponents up to 14 pounds heavier than themselves.

Junior Leif Williams and freshman Luke Larwin have been underdogs for most of the season at 165 and 174 pounds, respectively.

Due to an injury to projected starter Matt Lee in the fall, Williams and Larwin have had to wrestle up a few weight classes all season.

"It's incredibly tough wrestling up a class," Oregon head coach Chuck Kearney said. "But they never complain, and they're always ready to go out and compete. They're good friends, and they encourage each other."

In a wrestle-off to decide who would wrestle in which class at the upcoming Pacific-10 Conference Championships, Larwin defeated Williams in two straight matches by scores of 8-2 and 7-3, respectively.

Larwin will compete at 165 pounds, where he Turn to Wrestling, page 9A

## Ducks set to 'D' it up against Bruins offense

The Ducks will look to send their seniors out in style in their last home games and make a run at the NIT

By Peter Hockaday  
Oregon Daily Emerald

This weekend, the Oregon men's basketball team will try to win with the very weapon that destroyed it in losses at UCLA and Southern California earlier this season.

In cheerleader parlance, they'll use D-D-D-De-fense.

The Ducks (13-10 overall, 4-9 Pacific-10 Conference) will take on the Bruins (17-6, 10-2) tonight and the Trojans (17-1, 7-5) Saturday at McArthur Court in two games that could be crucial to Oregon's postseason dreams.

"These are going to be big games," senior forward Bryan Bracey said. "We know we match up well with them, and if we play like we're capable, we can beat them."

Bracey and four other Ducks —

Julius Hicks, Flo Hartenstein, David Jackson and Kristian Kristensen — will play their final home games (unless Oregon hosts an NIT game.)

Hicks could be the key to beating UCLA tonight. The center has led a defensive resurgence by the Ducks during the past three games. In that span, Oregon has held opponents to only 67.5 points per game, while Hicks has blocked 10 shots in that period.

The Ducks say they need to keep up the defensive intensity if they want to defeat either of the Southern California schools.

"We need to shut them down on defense," Bracey said.

When the Ducks and Bruins met in Los Angeles, it was UCLA's full-court press that wore Oregon down in the second half. The Bruins were able to pull away, thanks in large part to the 16 Oregon turnovers that the press caused.

Hicks was injured for that game, but center Chris Christoffersen had a career night, despite fouling out of the contest. "Big Chris" had 15 points and seven rebounds and outplayed UCLA center Dan Gadzuric all night. Since that game, Christof-

Turn to Men's, page 8A