



Ducks survive adversity, third after day one

■ The Oregon wrestling team finds itself in third place despite several injuries and a key upset

By Robbie McCallum
Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon head coach Chuck Kearney knew that his team would have to be at the top of its game if it wanted to win the Pacific-10 Conference wrestling title at McArthur Court.

But despite having three wrestlers in the finals and five others in position to qualify for the NCAA tournament, the Ducks were effectively eliminated from the team chase even

before the match started.

Sophomore Eric Webb, ranked No. 5 in the nation and the second seed at the heavyweight position, was forced to withdraw from the tournament due to a severe concussion sustained in warm-ups. Webb was warming up with teammate Doug Lee prior to the match when the two struck heads and Webb fell unconscious for approximately 20 seconds. The concussion is Webb's third this season. The blow to the head was rated a grade-three concussion, an injury which requires a two-week break from practice and competition. The concussion is Webb's third this season, which eliminates him from the Pac-10 Tournament and rest of the season.

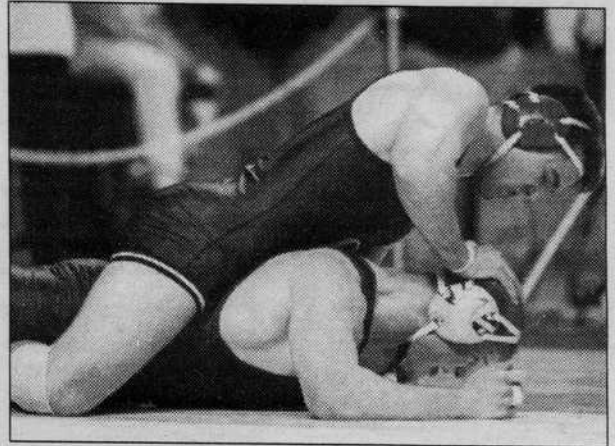
"When you've got a tight race of three to four teams, you can't have a

projected finalist out," Kearney said. "We were fourth without him and we'd be first or close to first with him."

"It's devastating," Kearney added. "The guys are used to watching him wrestle and feed off his energy. Our big concern right now is getting kids to the NCAA's."

Despite the setback, Oregon finished the day third in the team standings after Oregon wrestlers went 16-7 in the first three rounds. Favorite Arizona State leads the competition with 92 points, six ahead of Oregon State, who faltered in the semifinals. Defending Pac-10 champion Boise State trails Oregon by only half a point with 81. The remaining six schools are more than 20 points behind the leaders, well

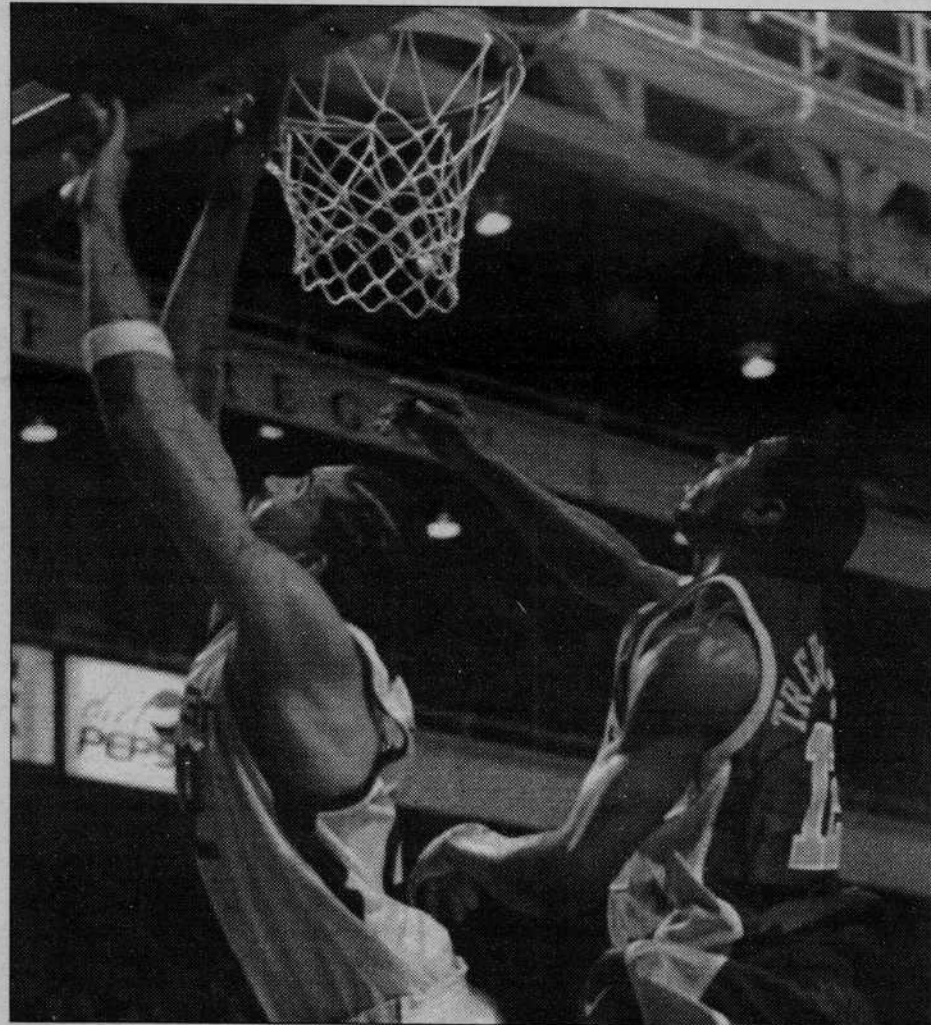
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Senior Chael Sonnen (top) easily qualified for the NCAA Tournament.

Ducks play 'typical' game, fall in OT to Southern Cal



Laura Smit Emerald

Senior Bryan Bracey (left) scored a team-high 22 points eight rebounds in his final game at McArthur Court.

■ On senior night, inexperienced Ducks can't hold on to 12-point second half lead and lose their final Pac-10 home game of the year

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

Bryan Bracey strolled into the basement media room after Saturday's game at McArthur Court, slouched in a chair in front of cameras, microphones and curious on-lookers, and tried to explain it all.

But nothing really came out. His mouth failed to tell the story that his big brown eyes clearly revealed.

Disbelief.

In their last Pacific-10 Conference game in white Oregon uniforms, Bracey and the rest of the Duck seniors could not hang on to a 12-point lead late in the second half, and fell in overtime, 87-80, to Southern California.

"I don't know if it's the toughest, but this is a tough loss," said Bracey, who paced the Ducks with 22 points and eight rebounds. "I was pretty confident that we were going to pull it off. As a team, I guess we thought we already had the game won and we just stopped blocking out and stopped doing the things that got us our lead."

After a Bracey three-pointer with 5:22 to play put the Ducks (13-12 overall, 4-11 Pac-10) up 72-60, a sudden chill drifted through The Pit. For the next three minutes and 50 seconds, Oregon couldn't hit the broad side of a barn, sparking a 13-0 Trojan run.

"This was a basketball game that we had control of and should have won," head coach Ernie Kent said. "It's been typical of our season where we get a big bucket and

turn around and wave our hands and do all those things, but our focus has to stay."

In overtime, the Ducks could only muster one bucket — an Anthony Norwood three-pointer — and shot just 1-for-9. Led by David Bluthenthal's seven points, USC (18-8, 8-6) out-scored Oregon 11-4 in the extra session. Bluthenthal had a game-high 29 points on 8-of-11 shooting, including a 5-for-7 performance from three-point land.

"We really wanted to get this for our seniors for all that they've done for us," junior guard Freddie Jones said. "And I thought we had it."

Before fouling out with 25 seconds to play in overtime, Jones had one of his better all-around games of the season. He scored 20 points on 8-of-13 shooting, grabbed seven boards and dished out seven assists — with only one turnover.

"Freddie played a tremendous game," said Norwood, who scored 16 points. "That's how we need Freddie every game, and he knows it. He's an awesome player, and that's exactly what we need from him."

The loss puts the Ducks' postseason hopes even further in the balance. To be considered for the National Invitational Tournament, Oregon must win one of its three remaining games, either at one of the Arizona schools or at Oregon State in the Pac-10 finale.

"There's no quit in this team," Kent said. "[The road] is a good place for us to be because right now it's important for me to teach these young guys how you come back and continue to battle. In reality, regardless

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Perhaps Dick Vitale should see the hard-luck Ducks



TWO MINUTES FOR
CROSSCHECKING

PETER HOCKADAY

During the Oklahoma-Maryland game on ABC Saturday, always-opinionated announcer Dick Vitale started spouting off about the Terrapins.

"Oooh, those Terrapins," Vitale said, or something to that effect. "They get me ex-

cited, because they go on those spurts, but they're such a letdown, baby! They just play so well at times, but then they go flat. They just go flat."

Hey, Dickie V., have you ever seen Oregon play?

You see, it gets harder and harder, as the men's basketball season winds to a close, to figure out why the Ducks lose so much.

At times during Saturday's 87-80 overtime loss to Southern California, Oregon looked like Duke. The Ducks could have been North Carolina or Florida, in green and yellow uniforms of course.

They were brilliant. They were dazzling. They were every sparkling adjective under the sun.

There was Freddie Jones, reaching back for a too-strong alley-oop pass from Luke Ridnour to throw it down for a Sportscenter-worthy jam. There was Bryan Bracey, fading back for a Jordan-esque jump shot. There was Anthony Norwood, draining three-balls like they were lay-ups.

But for the Ducks, there's always a Mr. Hyde to go along with that Dr. Jekyll. Bad defense, miserable rebounding and cold stretches on offense are just a few of the reasons the Ducks are 4-11 in the Pacific-10 Conference instead of 11-4.

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said Saturday's loss was "typical."

"That was a mini-version of our season," Kent said. "There were times when we

played great and looked awesome and controlled the game, and there were times when we didn't play particularly smart."

Oregon players have often said that if they all play well, on the same night, there isn't a team in the country that could stop them. The Ducks' 79-67 win over then-No. 7 Arizona on Feb. 1 is positive proof that Oregon can put together a complete game.

"We have a young team," Norwood said. "We're so good. If we could put it all together, it's going to happen. It's definitely going to happen."

There's always the youth factor that Norwood mentioned, if you're a Duck fan look-

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