

Oregon gets best of USC but can't get past Bruins

■ Angelina Wolvert scores 25 points at USC when Jody Runge lifts her suspension

By Scott Pesznecker
Oregon Daily Emerald

Even after a nationally televised victory against Southern California on Sunday afternoon, there wasn't much left for the Oregon women's basketball team to celebrate.

Never mind that the Ducks (14-11 overall, 7-8 Pacific-10 Conference) didn't beat the Trojans in their last three attempts. Never mind that Oregon had lost its last six games on the road. Never mind that the Ducks — a team so fragile this season when it comes to protecting leads — kept USC (9-15, 4-10) at arm's length down the stretch and won, 74-66.

Don't start thinking that Oregon is better off now than it was last week. Because on Friday, Oregon lost a 70-68 heartbreaker to UCLA (4-21, 3-11) and virtually destroyed its chances of receiving an eighth-straight NCAA tournament invite.

"The loss to UCLA hurt us," head coach Jody Runge told Fox Sports Net before Sunday's game. "We really have no margin of error for winning out our last four games."

In a torrent season marred by injuries, illness and frustration, more tension surrounded Oregon during the USC game.

On Saturday, Runge announced that senior forward Angelina Wolvert wouldn't play against the Trojans because Wolvert refused to shake hands with UCLA players after Friday's game.

But with 7 minutes, 47 seconds left in the first half and USC leading 20-8, Runge gave Wolvert the nod.

Wolvert scored the Ducks' next hoop, sparking an Oregon run that ended with a Kourtney Shreve three pointer. About a minute-and-a-half after Wolvert entered the game, USC's lead was only two.

Wolvert emerged from the dog house and played a whale of a game, notching 25 points, five rebounds, two assists, a steal, a block and three turnovers in 23 minutes. Her final basket was a three-pointer that swished through the net at the end of regulation.

"We've been struggling on the road all year," Wolvert said. "The effort wasn't there against UCLA. It was good that our team played tough."

Fox Sports Net commentators indicated that a meeting between Oregon players and coaches may have influenced Runge's decision to play Wolvert.

"We've had some adversity and we just need to fight through it," Runge said on a released statement. "Today, we did that."

Forward Brienne Meharry, who scored 15 points and grabbed a season-high 11 rebounds in a career-high 39 minutes, said it felt good to finally beat the Trojans.

"This was the last chance to play them," Meharry said. "We just kept on fighting and fighting and attacking."

However, Oregon must deal with the bitter taste of losing to the lowly Bruins. The Ducks planned on beating the Bruins by stopping guard Michelle Greco, the Pac-10's leading scorer.

Well, Greco didn't play due to a concussion suffered last week at Arizona State, but Oregon didn't seem prepared to stop anyone else from scoring. UCLA, the worst

shooting team in the conference, sank 48 percent of its field goals.

Forward Alyssa Fredrick came off the bench and scored 13 points on 6-of-9 shooting. But with three seconds left, she missed a 15-footer that would have tied the game.

The Ducks had another chance to tie or win the game when the ball went out of bounds with 2.2 on the clock, but the Bruins picked off Fredrick's quick pass to guard

Jamie Craighead.

"It's probably the worst time that this could happen as far as our [NCAA] tournament chances," Runge said. "We didn't defend anybody. We couldn't get five people."


Oregon faces the Arizona schools this week at McArthur Court. Arizona State will be the second first-place Pac-10 team to visit The Pit in two weeks.

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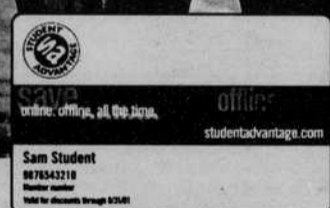
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