

Emotional night for Kents as Ernie, Jordan both win

■ Oregon head coach Ernie Kent won the Civil War and his son, Jordan, won the 4A Boys Championship game Saturday night

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

CORVALLIS — It was as poignant a moment as you can find in this sports world cluttered with so much trash.

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent, voice hoarse, addressed the media in the basement of Oregon State's Gill Coliseum less than a half-hour after his team had become NIT-eligible by beating the Beavers 69-60.

Less than four feet away, on a 32-inch television, Kent's son, Jordan, a forward for the Churchill High Lancers, was celebrating his victory in the Oregon Class 4A boys basketball title game and was also facing the media.

The camera cut to Kent's wife, Dianna, in the crowd.

Fox Sports Net launched a Jordan Kent highlight reel, as a broadcaster interviewed the high school junior. Still, the coach was oblivious to the

praise his son was receiving.

Someone told Kent that his son and wife were on the television.

"What? What am I talking to you all for?" the coach exclaimed, and leaned over the table in front of him in an attempt to see the TV. "The game's on TV and I can't even see it?"

It was a winning evening for the Kent family. Jordan scored a game-high 20 points to lead Churchill to a 78-46 victory over Benson that, by all accounts, was never really close. Meanwhile, in Corvallis, Jordan's dad coached the Ducks through one of their ugliest games of the season to a victory that, finally, qualified them for the NIT (even though Oregon was not selected).

Churchill's victory was felt by both father and son. Standing outside the Ducks' locker room after Saturday's game, reporters heard the coach launch into a joyous tirade after he

found out that Churchill was winning by 30 points.

"How 'bout that?" Kent said. "How 'bout THAT?"

"He just went bonkers," Oregon center Julius Hicks said afterwards.

At that point, Coach Kent didn't know that Jordan was the star of the state title game. Along with the television exposure and the points, Jordan was named to the OSAA/US Bank All-Tournament Second Team. As the Lancers gathered at Portland's Memorial Coliseum to accept the championship trophy, Jordan lofted the hardware above his head triumphantly, in a moment that obviously was one of the most emotional of his life.

The other Kent, meanwhile, dissected Oregon's win over in-state rival Oregon State, but his mind was with Jordan and Dianna in Portland.

"It will definitely be a happy household in the Kent house tonight," Kent said.

For good reason.

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point in his post-game comments after the final contest of his first season in Corvallis.

"We probably should apologize to the 8,870 Oregon State fans for our effort," McKay said. "We didn't have any offense. [Oregon] played with a sense of urgency like they wanted to continue their season. That was the worst effort.

"I never saw it in their eyes."

That could have been said for either team in the opening minutes of the game, as Oregon was only up 9-3 at the 11:10 mark of the half. Missed shots continued to pile up for both teams, and Oregon entered the half leading 23-19. The Beavers shot 25 percent from the field in the first half while the Ducks managed to shoot just under 30 percent in that time.

"I don't think we came out flat, we just weren't playing as smart as we could have been," Bracey said.

The score remained close during the beginning of the second half, but then the tide took a noticeable turn in the Ducks' favor when Oregon State forward Brian Jackson fouled out with 11:31 to play. Jackson finished with 10 points.

With Jackson out, Oregon took a 41-31 lead after a Julius Hicks rebound-basket with 10:20 remaining. The Beavers made a late charge and cut to within 54-50 after two Jason Heide free throws at the 2:29 mark, which prompted the Gill Coliseum crowd to rise to its feet in roaring approval.

But then Bracey put up a missed shot and Julius Hicks rebounded it and emphatically threw it down with two hands to help the Ducks put the game away.

"We were only up four and that

put us by six," Bracey said. "That shut up the crowd."

The Ducks then converted 13 free throws in the final 1:11 to clinch the win.

The victory came a week after the Ducks' embarrassing 39-point defeat to Arizona. After the loss, Kent knew that his team was fatigued and gave them three days off before practicing for the Civil War.

"It was a week that we put Arizona behind us quickly," Kent said. "You can't dwell. I challenged my team. It's been a long haul, and it'll be interesting to see if we get into the NIT."

As Kent would find out less than 24 hours later, however, his team will not be making its third straight postseason appearance despite being the only non-NCAA Tournament team in the Pac-10 that would be eligible to play in the NIT.



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