

SPORTS

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Ducks steal conference control from Trojans

■ Oregon defeats USC with last-minute heroics from Luke Jackson and the Mac Court crowd

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

On Saturday afternoon, the Oregon men's basketball team violently shoved Southern California out of the passenger's seat.

The Ducks are driving the conference bus solo.

In a game that had the atmosphere of a championship contest, Oregon beat USC 73-69 in front of 9,087 rowdy fans at McArthur Court. With the win, the Ducks moved into the conference lead and knocked the Trojans into second place.

"I don't know how much better it can get for Oregon right now," Ducks head coach Ernie Kent said after the game.

On the court, Oregon survived its first close home game of the season to fend off USC. The game wasn't decided until the final seconds; when the Trojans failed to hit their shots, the Ducks made their huge buckets and rode the tide of Mac Court emotion to the win.

With 38 seconds left and Oregon down by one point, Duck forward Luke Jackson drove the lane, hit a floating jump shot and was fouled by Sam Clancy. Jackson's free throw made the score 71-69.

On the Trojans' next possession, the Ducks' defense and a rocking crowd forced USC to wait for an open shot. Finally, Trojan forward David Bluthenthal found himself alone at the top of the key with five seconds left in the game and two seconds on the shot clock.

"He's such a good shooter that you couldn't tell when it left his hand if it was off or not," Kent said.

Bluthenthal's shot bounced off the rim, the Ducks collected the rebound, and James Davis hit two free throws with one second left in the game to seal the Oregon win.

Bluthenthal, who averages 11.3 points per contest, struggled all game and ended with just four points. Clancy led the Trojans with 25 points, but never touched the ball in the final 50 seconds.

"I wasn't disappointed," Clancy said about not getting the ball in the clutch. "I had faith in my teammates to hit the big shot."

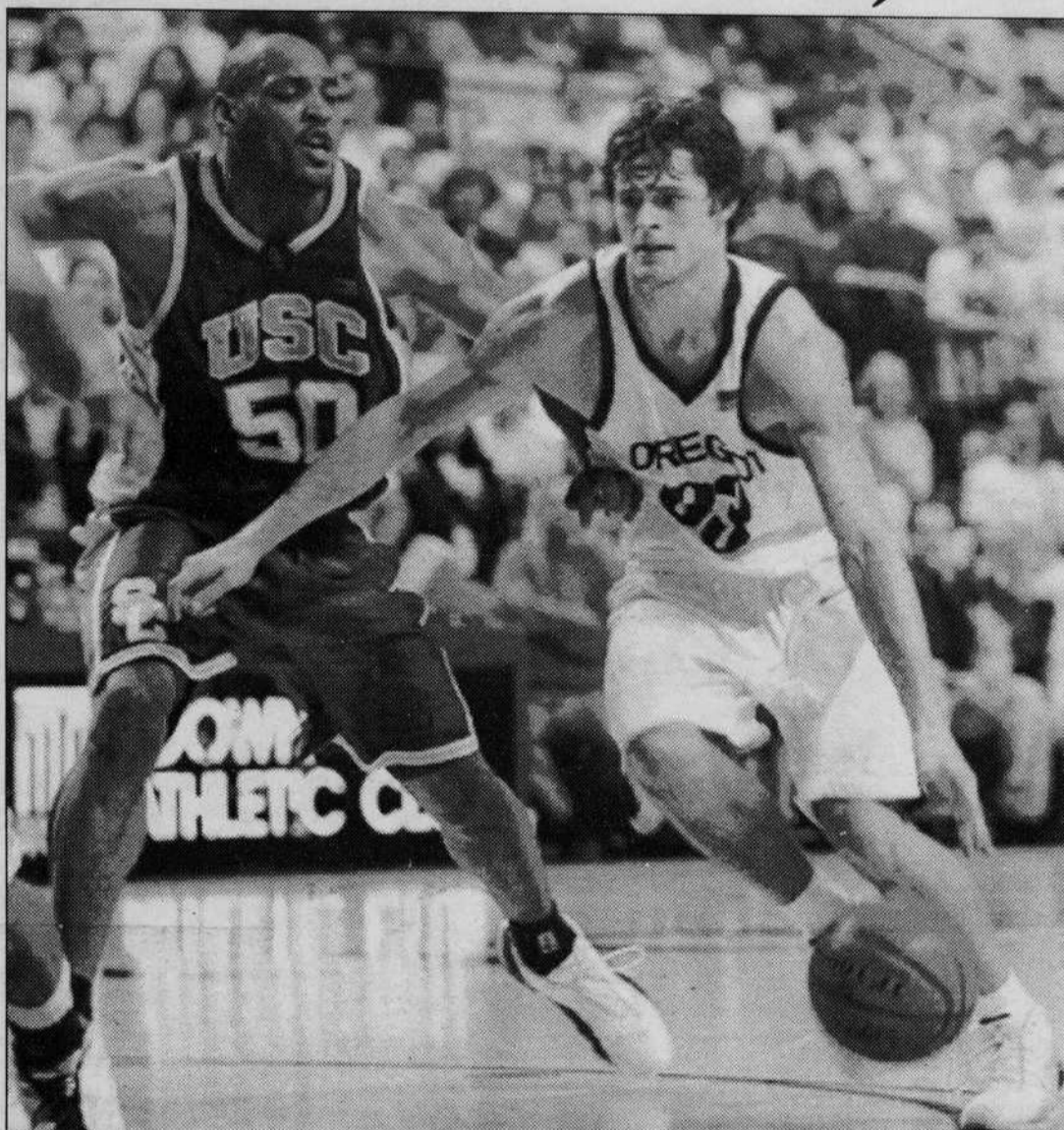
Clancy seemed to be one of the few USC players who was unfazed by the Mac Court Pit Crew. He hit two jump shots in the final three minutes that temporarily silenced the crazy crowd.

Many Oregon players gave the fans partial credit for the win.

"The atmosphere tonight was crazy," Ducks guard Luke Ridnour said. "That's what we all came to Oregon for — to play in an environment like that."

Those fans saw a hard-fought game. There were six lead changes in the

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Adam Amato Emerald

Oregon's Luke Jackson drives in on Sam Clancy in the game's closing seconds. Jackson made the basket, was fouled and converted the three-point play to give the Ducks the lead for good, as well as sole possession of first place in the Pac-10.

Bibby: Pit Crew a 'disgrace'

■ USC coach rips Oregon fans after insensitive chants during the game

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

Henry Bibby has feelings, too.

In heated banter with reporters after Oregon's 73-69 win over USC on Saturday, Trojans head coach Bibby asked a reporter if the scribe was sensitive.

"Well, I'm just like you," Bibby said when the reporter answered in the affirmative. "You don't think I'm sensitive, but I am."

Bibby was upset after Oregon fans taunted him and his team throughout much of Saturday's emotional contest. He was particularly upset over taunts of "deadbeat dad" and "your son hates you," both in reference to Bibby's son, Mike Bibby, a point guard for the NBA's Sacramento Kings. The two Bibbys

have a much-publicized strained relationship, and the USC coach called the taunts a "disgrace."

"They don't know me, they don't know anything about me," Bibby said. "I don't think this kind of behavior should be condoned anywhere in the Pac-10 or by the University of Oregon."

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent responded to Bibby's comments by defending his home crowd.

"I don't think it's a disgrace," Kent said. "I think this is a great college basketball environment, and I don't know why that would be said. I'm sure when we go down to their place, I'm going to have to face the same pressure with the noise and the crowd."

Emotions reached a fever pitch when USC assistant coaches jostled with fans after the contest. According to Trojan

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An epic duel worth savoring



Jeff Smith
Hakuna Matata

It's a shame that Saturday's game might be remembered more for the postgame frustration than for the 40 minutes of action.

It's too bad that, when people look back on this contest, they will probably recall USC coach Henry Bibby's words that McArthur Court fans are "a total disgrace" more than they'll remember the frenzied atmosphere that those fans helped provide.

And, as a fan of spirited athletics, it's upsetting that two skilled basketball teams can play as intense a game as there is, and still be overshadowed by actions and words between the crowd

and the coaches.

Because for those 9,087 at sold out Mac Court, and those watching across the country on national television, Saturday's Pacific-10 Conference showdown, won by the Ducks 73-69, didn't leave much to be desired.

"I don't know about everybody else, but I'm exhausted," Oregon coach Ernie Kent said. "It was just like a heavyweight bout with two of the best teams going at it."

Both Oregon and USC entered the game with 8-2 league records, having

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After a loss to Arizona, Oregon women come home empty-handed

■ The Ducks turn up with goose eggs in the desert with an 84-68 loss to the Wildcats

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon women's basketball team needed to win Saturday's game against Arizona to improve its chances of an NCAA Tournament berth.

More importantly, the Ducks knew it.

But they didn't do it in an 84-68 loss to Arizona at the McKale Center in Tucson.

Oregon, now 7-6 in Pacific-10 Conference play (12-10 overall), is

in serious danger of being left out of the field of 64 for the first time since the 1992-93 season.

"This loss hurts because we should have won," sophomore Cathrine Kraayeveld said. "We have to look past this and focus on what we can do better from this weekend. We have to focus on the positive."

The Ducks also lost to Arizona State, 69-58, on Thursday.

On Jan. 4, Oregon defeated Arizona 72-53. On Saturday, though, Oregon couldn't buy a basket.

The Ducks committed 25 turnovers in the game, including eight by senior Shaquala Williams. Arizona's feisty and aggressive defense led to weak

passes and early mistakes.

As the game wore on, Oregon could seemingly do nothing right offensively. The Wildcats (11-11 overall, 7-6 Pac-10) kept their defense in the Ducks' faces all night, forcing Oregon to shoot 36 percent from the field.

"I think that we didn't start aggressively," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said. "When you do that, you can't take the hit and you can't take the shot. That's what set the tone in

the first half."

As usual, Williams paced the Ducks, leading the team with 21 points on 8-of-20 shooting. With two three-pointers in each half, she also led Oregon in the category, going 4-for-9.

"Shaquala is a great player, and she always keeps them in the game," Arizona head coach Joan Bonvicini said. "She is the kind of player who makes everyone around her better."

Fueled by a defense that forced the Ducks to commit 16 turnovers in the first half, including four within the first few possessions of the game, the Wildcats dominated the first half.

Although no single player stood out, as a team, Arizona was more precise with its play. The Ducks started off slow, failing to hit a shot in the first four minutes.

Senior Jamie Craighead nailed a three-pointer in addition to Williams' two, but as a whole, Oregon's shooting was off. To make matters worse, the Ducks failed to sink a free throw until 30 seconds remained in the half when senior Ednisha Curry made two from the charity stripe.

Freshman Andrea Bills kept the Oregon rebounding strong, helping lead the team to a 23-17 advantage
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