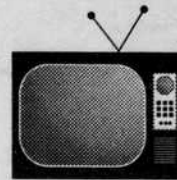


SPORTS

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Best Bet
Pac-10 Tournament:
Oregon vs. USC
6:17 p.m., FSN



Friday, March 8, 2002

Ducks survive scare, pull away from UW

■ Oregon outscores the Huskies 51-22 in the second half and will face USC tonight

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

LOS ANGELES — It hadn't even been a week since they had been celebrating their outright league title on the floor of Pauley Pavilion.

But here the Ducks were, back in Los Angeles and realizing that they had to prove once again that they were the league's best team.

Welcome to the revamped world of the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament.

In the opening of the game, the Oregon men's basketball team didn't appear ready at all for the league tourney, which made its return after a 12-year absence.

There were missed shots, some only hitting air. There were defensive lapses. There was even a 35-second shot clock violation.

But then the second half began.

And that's when league champion and No. 1 seed Oregon found its rhythm and ran all over eighth-seeded Washington, 86-64, Thursday afternoon at the Staples Center. The ninth-ranked Ducks (23-7, 14-4) advance on to tonight's 6 p.m. semifinal game against revenge-minded USC, which dominated Stanford, 103-78, in the second game Thursday.

"We talked about this being a conditioning game for us," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "This was (the Huskies') NCAA championship

game. They had more energy than us in the first half."

When Washington's Errol Knight drilled a three-pointer to put his steam on top, 31-18, with 5:53 to play in the first half, it tied the biggest deficit Oregon has had all season.

"We were kind of tired in the first half," point guard Luke Ridnour said. "But in the second half we got our legs back under us. All it takes is a couple defensive stops on defense for this team. We feel we can come back on anybody."

Ridnour scored 11 points, but it was his first name counterpart, Luke Jackson, who kept the Ducks afloat throughout the game. Jackson scored a game-high 27 points and played tough defense on Washington sophomore Doug Wrenn, who made just 6-of-14 shot attempts for 14 points.

The most admirable Duck performance of the afternoon came from senior Freddie Jones, who scored 15 points in 34 minutes of play despite dealing with a nasty flu. Jones had a 102-degree temperature before game time and didn't find his offensive flow until the second half.

"In the first half, I told my teammates that they had to be more aggressive because I didn't feel that I was capable early on," Jones said. "But then I started feeling better."

Subsequently, Oregon started playing better.

After a 12-minute delay because of shot clock difficulties, the Ducks scored the first six points of the second half on consecutive threes by Jackson and Jones.

Those treys began a 44-15 Oregon run that left little doubt in

Turn to **Basketball**, page 10



Adam Amato Emerald

Oregon's Luke Jackson (left) and Robert Johnson (center) battle for a rebound with Washington's Doug Wrenn in the Ducks' 86-64 victory Thursday. Oregon will face USC tonight in the semifinals of the Pac-10 Tournament at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Tournaments worth the wait

In the last week, Oregon fans have been able to see Shaquala Williams stare down the Mendiola (Giuliana and Gioconda) sisters, Arizona State stop the big red machine, and Oregon State barely squeak by an equally-talented USC squad.

Isn't the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament great?

And with the men's play already started, there's sure to be at least a couple of close games mixed in there, and possibly even a couple of upsets. But then again, with the level of competition in the Pac-10, upset is not a word that is common.

It's unfathomable to believe that the conference waited more than a decade to reinstall the men's tournament, and just began the women's version this year. The play from the Oregon women was about as intense as it gets during the three games the team participated in, and just about every other squad played to its highest potential.



Hank Hager

Behind the Dish

team goes through to the finals in preparation for the real tournament," Arizona head coach Lute Olson said recently.

Olson is one of two coaches who doesn't particularly care for the conference's decision to

Turn to **Hager**, page 10

While other conferences — most notably the Atlantic Coast Conference and Big Ten Conference — were reaping the benefits of an extended season in past years, the Pac-10 sat on its behind because of three schools. Stanford, Arizona and UCLA all dissented to playing the tournament, at least until this season.

"It's just asinine that we beat up on each other for 18 games, then turn around and exhaust whichever

Despite flu, Jones heats up late to energize UO in win

■ The senior scores 13 points in the second half of Oregon's first-round win over Washington

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

LOS ANGELES — In the postgame press conference, a reporter asked Oregon senior Freddie Jones why he "wasn't into the game" during the first half.

Before Jones could answer, Oregon head coach Ernie Kent, seated next to Jones at the podium, spoke up.

"He had a 102 temperature before tip-off that finally got down to about 99 before he came back out of that locker room," Kent said. "Our doctors

were real concerned about putting him out there."

Jones finished with 15 points in Oregon's 86-64 victory Thursday over Washington at the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament.

He said he began feeling sick Wednesday and felt worse Thursday morning. He had cold sweats. He felt weak. But in no way was he going to miss the game.

"I was always going to play," Jones said. "I was just concerned that I wouldn't be much of a factor for our team and that it would force me to sit out."

The senior guard was visibly struggling with his stamina in the first half.

Turn to **Pac-10**, page 10