

SPORTS

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Best Bet
NCAA Tournament
Cal vs. Penn
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Oregon captures first NCAA win since 1960

■ The Ducks overcome a sluggish first half to knock off Montana

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Ernie Kent, with an expressionless face, opened his postgame comments with words of disappointment.

"We know we did not play very good basketball today," Kent said.

But then it was his players' turn to speak.

"It was the first game for us in the NCAA Tournament and we didn't come out like we would have liked to, but the biggest thing is we got the win," Luke Ridnour said.

"We were just so excited. A lot of us

have never been here before," Luke Jackson said.

"I was nervous," Robert Johnson said. Those words popped a light bulb in Kent's head.

"You sit here and realize that only Freddie Jones has had real experience in the Big Dance," Kent said. "This team needed to go through this experience."

What the second-seeded Oregon men's basketball team went through Thursday was an 81-62 victory over 15th-seeded Montana in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

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'Nervous' Ducks begin slowly, but will move on

■ After scoring just 10 points in the first 10 minutes of the game, second-seeded Oregon pulls ahead of Montana in the second half

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The game ended on an emphatic Freddie Jones dunk, a two-handed monster slam that was more of a message to Wake Forest, Oregon's second-round opponent, than to Montana, Oregon's first-round foe.

But that dunk was hardly indicative of the Ducks' afternoon.

After a sluggish start and finish that was far from high-flying, the Oregon men's basketball team simply out-matched Montana on their way to an 81-62 win Thursday afternoon in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. The Ducks looked nervous and spoke of the NCAA Tournament "jitters" after the game.

"I was nervous," Oregon junior forward Robert Johnson said. "It was my first time being here."

If that late Jones dunk was representative of the game's end, there were a handful of plays that represented Oregon's sluggish start. Duck center Chris

Christoffersen fumbled the basketball out of bounds on two consecutive possessions to start the game, then forward Luke Jackson had the ball stripped out of bounds to Montana. Jones scored Oregon's first basket, a three-pointer, almost three minutes into the contest.

"We know we did not play a good basketball game," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "Part of it was the first-game jitters, and being here for the first time for most of these guys."

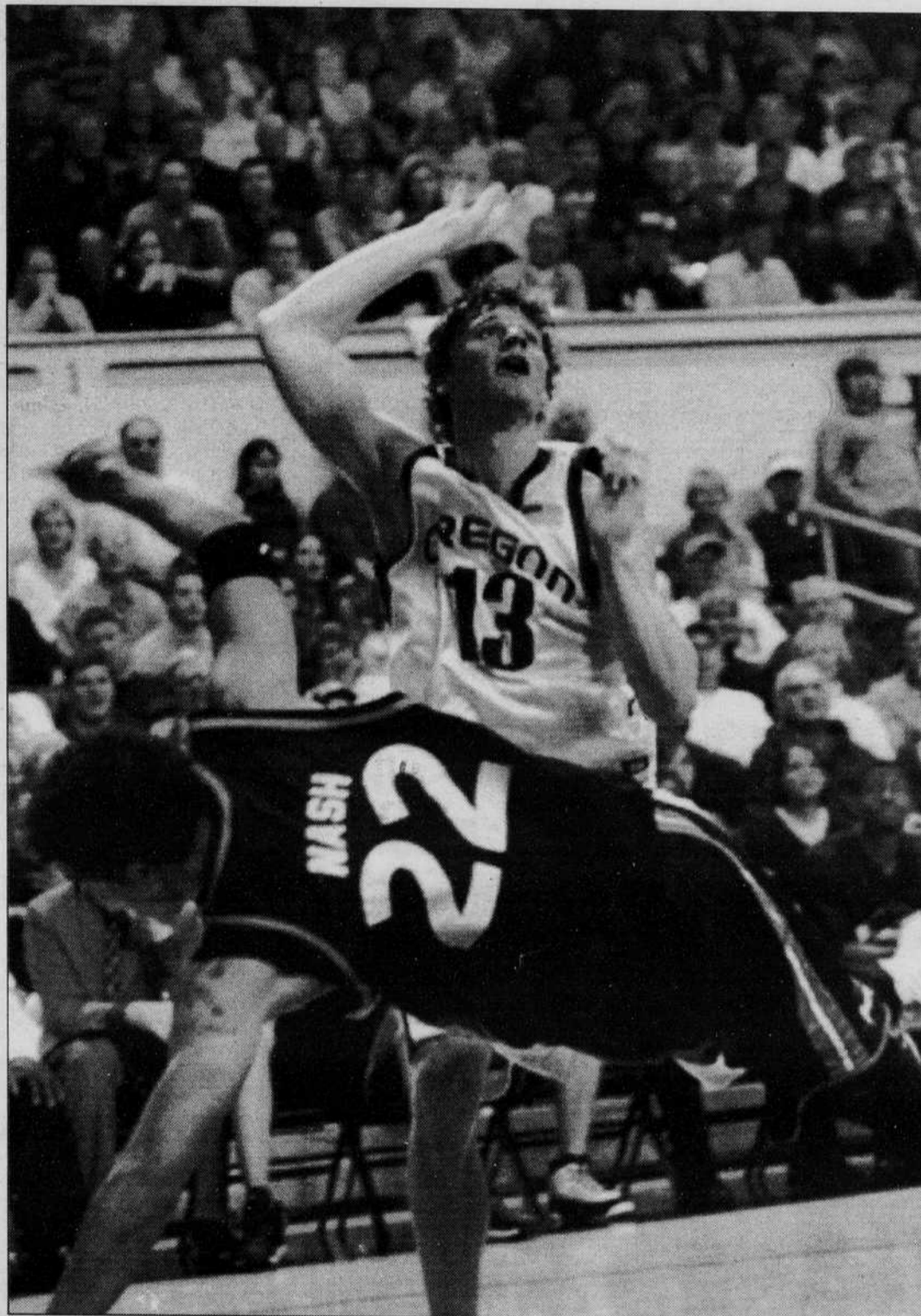
After a Luke Ridnour layin made the score 5-2 in favor of Oregon, the Ducks went six minutes without a field goal, a drought that was capped by another Ridnour layup with 10:40 left in the first half. The Ducks missed several shots during that period, but hit three free throws to keep the score tied at eight at the end of the drought.

Oregon never seemed to find a rhythm in the first half of Thursday's game.

The Ducks scored only four fast-break points, all on layins by Ridnour.

Oregon shot well in the first half, but the Ducks simply didn't take many shots. Oregon hit 50 percent of its field goals in the first half, but took just 20 shots, compared to Montana's 29. The Grizzlies shot just 37.9 percent in the

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Adam Amato Emerald

Sophomore point guard Luke Ridnour scored 18 points against Montana to lead the Ducks to their first NCAA Tournament win since 1960. Oregon will play Wake Forest in the second round Saturday.

Oregon looks to move forward after tumultuous 2001 season

■ With the coaching staff and four players gone from last year's squad, the Oregon softball team begins anew

By Eric Martin
Oregon Daily Emerald

Kate Peterson left the Oregon women's softball team in a rush. She didn't tell anyone she was leaving. She didn't know where she was going. The freshman just knew she had to get out of Eugene because some team members and coaches "ran me away from the love of the game."

"I left for a lot of reasons," the current Brigham Young sophomore said. She has since married and now goes by Kate Walker. "A lot of it was politics. The assistant coaches

were conspiring against certain players."

The team of nine returning letterwinners and nine newcomers was embroiled in controversy that had nearly reached a crescendo. Only a whisper of the increasingly vocal team tensions ebbed from the confines of the dugout. But frustrations escalated to defiance.

A three-year starting catcher quit three weeks before season's end. Three players — including Walker — who were eligible for the 2002 season didn't return. And a June 2001 audit revealed head coach Rick Gamez had misused \$5,748.64 in team travel funds. He resigned in October.

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New-look Oregon softball team opens Pac-10 play against OSU

■ With a host of new players and a new coaching staff, Oregon hosts Oregon State in the first Pac-10 game of the season

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

With 22 games under their belt this season, the Oregon softball team (14-8) will host its first game at Howe Field and first contest against a Pacific-10 Conference foe at 2 p.m. Saturday against Oregon State.

The Beavers come into Eugene with a No. 14 national ranking and a 23-8 record.

After a controversial 2001, which included a resignation of the team's head coach after financial issues, the departure of three starters and a 1-20 record in the

Pac-10, the Ducks have rebounded and are encouraged by their play through the pre-season.

"Overall, the kids have responded well to each other with a lot of newcomers and extremely well to myself and the two assistant coaches," interim head coach Brent Rincon said. "They are getting along, care about each other and want to achieve a high level of success, and we are working hard to make that a reality for them."

Due primarily to what current players described as team chemistry problems, four Ducks quit the team in the last year. Oregon lost Lisa Wangler, who was selected as team MVP after leading Oregon with a .367 batting average from the leadoff

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