

Men know their problems at midpoint

The Ducks are focusing on rebounding as they head into the second half of the season

Men's basketball notes

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

Midway through the men's basketball season, things are clearer than a summer day.

There's your rebounding and your non-rebounding.

When the Ducks pull down more rebounds than their opponent, Oregon is 7-1. When the Ducks lose the rebounding battle, they're 8-4.

There's your big men and your non-big men.

When Ian Crosswhite, Robert Johnson, Brian Helquist, Jay Anderson and Matt Short combine for 22 points (an average of 4.4 points each), the Ducks are 15-0. When they don't, Oregon is 0-5.

Then there's your offense and your non-offense. The Ducks are 11-0 when they outshoot

their opponent, 4-4 when they don't.

And though there are clearly defined differences between Oregon's losses and its wins as it heads into the second half of Pacific-10 Conference play, one thing remains constant.

The Ducks are 15-5. Just like last year.

"We are what we are. We're not going to change overnight," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "If you look at all our Pac-10 losses, the common factor in all of them was rebounding the basketball. And our big guys know that, and they're going to respond to that and they're going to get the job done."

Oregon opens the second half of conference play needing to work on several areas, starting with the rebounding.

"It's got to be something we've got to want," Johnson said of rebounding. "We've got to take it upon ourselves to do it. It's all mental."

The second issue is winning on the road. The Ducks have a 4-4 road and neutral-site record, 1-3 in conference play. That won't be an issue this week because Oregon hosts Stanford and

California on Thursday and Saturday, respectively. The Ducks will have a chance to wreak some revenge, as the Bay Area squads beat Oregon by a combined 40 points when the Ducks traveled south.

Ridnour remains

Luke Ridnour was named as one of 30 finalists Monday for the John Wooden Award, given annually to the best player in college basketball.

Good thing, as Ridnour is featured on a billboard in New York's Times Square, with his last name crossed out and "Wooden" scrawled across it in red ink.

But Ridnour has lived up to his hype this year. He averages 19.1 points per game, third in the Pac-10, and is one of four Pac-10 players to score in double-digits in every contest this season. He leads the conference in assists with 6.7 per game and is fifth in steals.

Bust their bracket

ESPN.com's Bracketology, which dares to ask the question, "If the season ended now,

what would the NCAA Tournament look like?" has Oregon down to a No. 8 seed.

According to ESPN bracketologist Joe Lunardi, the Ducks would play a first-round matchup in Nashville, Tenn., with No. 9-seed Gonzaga, with a possible second-round game against red-hot Louisville, a No. 1 seed.

"Someone should do a study on the road performances of teams with unusual homecourt advantages," Lunardi quips in his Oregon "team report." "Not sure how you would define the latter, but Oregon certainly qualifies."

Racy

The Ducks need help this weekend if they want to get back into the conference race. If Oregon beats Stanford and Cal, the Ducks need Oregon State to also beat the Bay Area squads, and then the Cardinal, Bears and Ducks would be in a three-way tie for third in the conference, depending on how Arizona State fares in Washington.

Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailymerald.com.

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 5). You're smart, and getting smarter. Exercise your body as well as your brain, and end up with more energy than when you started. Begin by signing up with a good coach or guru.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) _ Today is a 9 _ You're learning quickly, but don't get cocky. You're not ready to challenge the champion yet, so don't tick off him or her. Be cool.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) _ Today is a 5 _ You're slow to anger, and sometimes slow to take action _ which is perfect for you. But if there's been a burr under your saddle for a while, let somebody know.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) _ Today is an 8 _ A friend from far away can help you make money, so don't spend the whole time gossiping. Ask what he or she is doing effectively, and apply it to your situation.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) _ Today is a 5 _ Review your assets and liabilities, and reassess your net worth. Odds are good it's greater than you thought, and it could soon get even greater. More is better.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) _ Today is an 8 _ You like to keep up with the latest styles, and that can get expensive. You may have to moonlight to make it happen. But, hey, that's doable.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) _ Today is a 5 _ Don't cry if something at home gets broken or bent beyond repair. It could be the opportunity to get that new one you've been wanting.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) _ Today is a 9 _ Your creativity is boundless today. You're good, and you're also inspired. Accept the encouragement, and get started on your greatest achievement to date.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) _ Today is a 5 _ Don't let yourself become enraged by a co-worker's insensitivity. Instead, use the energy to plow through a tough job.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) _ Today is a 9 _ You're ready to take action, and the time is finally right. Blast ahead, using what you've recently learned. You can win!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) _ Today is a 5 _ Something you've been putting up with at home could be getting to be too much trouble. Can you fix it yourself? Maybe, if that's what you like to do. Otherwise, pay.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) _ Today is an 8 _ A friend's crazy idea, plus your technical skill, could lead to a brilliant advancement. There's strength in diversity.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) _ Today is a 5 _ You've done the work, so you should get the pay. D

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