

Oregon pleased with its offense

Oregon's offense flourished on Sunday and set the tempo as a run-and-gun type of offensive team

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

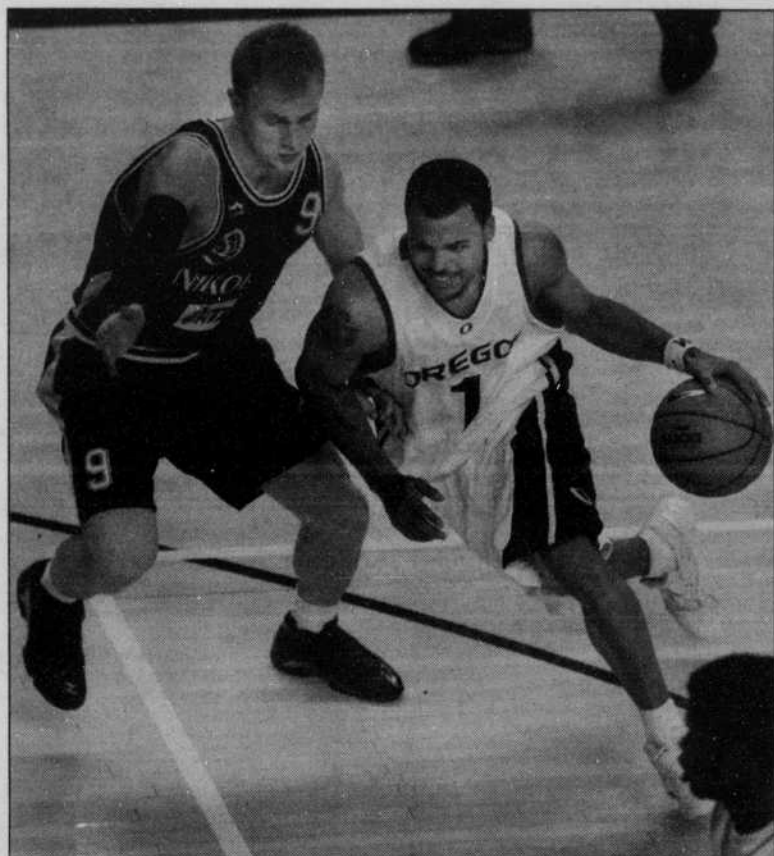
Oregon's offense showed up in its first exhibition game on Sunday night. It showed up to play.

It was a run-and-gun, fast-paced 40 minutes where the Ducks outscored their opponent, MBC Nikolaev of Ukraine, 96-76. Oregon changed it up quite a bit with consistent substitutions and varying lineups throughout the night.

"If we would have kept the right group on the floor, we could have probably scored 125 or 130 points the way we were clicking in the second half," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said.

The Ducks scored 20 points less in the second half than they did in the first. However, they shot 60.9 percent from the field. On the evening, Oregon shot 54.4 percent, but it still isn't good enough.

"We probably could have shot 70 percent," Kent said. "Just because of some substitutions we made in the first half where we lost a great lead and great momentum in the game. If the right lineup is on the floor, we probably could have shot a much



Mark McCambridge Photographer

James Davis and the Ducks shot 54.4 percent from the field in the 20-point win.

higher percentage and I think that's pretty impressive."

The right lineup is still to be determined for Oregon. The starting lineup for the Ducks featured guards Andre Joseph and Aaron Brooks, forwards Luke Jackson and Ian Crosswhite and center Mitch Platt.

Jackson earned a double-double with 18 points and 10 rebounds. Jackson played 22 minutes and went 8 of 14 from the field. All of this came after suffering an injury to his toe last week and missing last week's scrimmage due to a funeral.

"There was a lot of positives tonight on offense," Jackson said. "It would

have been nice to execute a little bit more offensively, but we're so fast we didn't get to set up very much."

That was the theme of the evening for the Ducks. The 8,666 at McArthur Court got to see a dose of the speed the Ducks possess.

"We're definitely capable of running and gunning just like we did tonight," Jackson said. "Obviously when you play a little bit tougher team, we're not going to get as many transition buckets."

Oregon's perimeter game came together in the second half. The Ducks went 3 for 3 from beyond the arc in the last 20 minutes. They shot 4 for 12

BASKETBALL

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eased into it," he said.

The Ducks started a relatively young group, highlighted by two freshmen: Brooks and Mitch Platt. Jackson played despite a sore big toe he injured last week during practice, and Crosswhite started at forward opposite Jackson. Senior Andre Joseph also started at guard and led a team that shot 54.4 percent from the field.

"The good thing is, knowing that it is an exhibition, you can throw out a lot of different lineups out there," Kent said. "We tried a lot of different things, yet at the same time, we didn't show a lot of stuff out there because we don't want to give too much for Fresno State to see on tape. There is a lot more stuff we could have done out there."

Nikolaev hung with Oregon in the first half and at one time even took a three-point lead after a three-pointer by Volodymyr Polyakh at the 9:52 mark. The Ducks, however, pulled away convincingly at that point and ended the first half with a 13-point lead.

The lead ballooned to 30 points by the 11-minute mark of the second half.

"When you're up by that much, it's

hard to run the offense," Crosswhite said. "It's just about having discipline."

Overall, the Ducks shot 46.7 percent from beyond the three-point arc, pulled in 42 rebounds — compared to Nikolaev's 25 — and committed 14 turnovers, which Kent said was a source of concern for him entering the game.

Better yet, they held their Ukrainian counterparts to 48.3 percent shooting from the field.

"We can nit pick at a lot of things, but overall we were pleased," Kent said. "We know we've got a lot of work to do, but considering how far we think we need to go, I was pretty impressed with what I saw out there in terms of the offensive productivity, energy, passing the ball and doing some of those things."

Oregon's reserves combined to post 25 points, led by James Davis' 12.

Matt Short and Jordan Kent were both kept out of the game due to foot injuries, but both are expected to be ready for the start of the season.

The Ducks play next against the EA Sports All-Stars on Nov. 17 at McArthur Court. The real games begin on Nov. 21 when Fresno State visits The Pit.

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GAME

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They're still alive for a postseason bowl.

"How else can we feel but great?" quarterback Jason Fife said.

The Ducks' win moves them to magic victory No. 6, which guarantees that Oregon will at least be bowl eligible this season. The win and losses by Washington and UCLA on Saturday pulls Oregon into a tie for fifth place with the Huskies and Golden Bears.

"We did a nice job," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "We regrouped in the fourth quarter. We won the fourth quarter and won the game."

The win was a total team effort, with Oregon's defense and offense showing up when absolutely needed. The offense was able to put just seven points on the scoreboard and gain 187 yards of total offense through the first three quarters. But by the same token, the Duck defense held the Golden Bears to 10 points and 164 yards.

That included 87 yards of passing in three frames for California (5-6, 3-3) quarterback Aaron Rodgers, who had completed 17 passes in 22 attempts for 307 yards last week in the Golden Bears' 51-23 win over Arizona State.

Overall, Oregon held California to 188 yards passing and 106 yards on the ground.

"I know on the sidelines, watching the defense make those last two or three stands, it definitely did feel like a blast from the past in some respects," Clemens said.

With the Ducks down 17-7 and 6:35 left in the game, Clemens began a six-play drive that culminated in a 31-yard touchdown strike down the

middle to tight end Tim Day.

The score pulled the Ducks within three and helped pave the way for the Oregon defense to stop California after three plays and two minutes of possession.

That's when Clemens began Oregon's final drive of the game.

The Burns native ended the game 9 of 18 for 117 yards and one touchdown strike. Fife finished 8 of 16 for 107 yards and one score as well.

Clemens "did a nice job," Bellotti said. "He started out 1 for 6 and he missed two wide-open people. I think he was a little jazzed, and put a little too much on the football. Jason Fife came in and did some great things. He went 5 for 6 and then got cold. That's when we decided to make that switch and it worked out for us."

California threatened to come back with less than a minute left in the game.

A James Bethea kick return found the Golden Bears at their own 25 with 47 seconds left to go. Rodgers completed a 28-yard pass to Garrett Cross to start the drive.

Burl Toler then hauled in a 14-yard pass to the Oregon 33. An incomplete pass to Geoff McArthur gave California a 2nd-and-10 with 21 seconds left. Then came an incompletion to Toler.

On 3rd-and-10, Rodgers was pressured by the Oregon defensive line. Rolling right, he threw a pass to the middle of the field where Lewis stepped in front of the California wide receiver at the Oregon 13 for the interception.

"They threw two guys vertical and max protected," Mitchell said of the final defensive play. "One guy came across. Keith came over and made a great play."

That's a comeback.

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Mark McCambridge Photographer

Oregon's Keith Lewis tackles Golden Bears running back Adimchinobe Echemandu, who had 65 rushing yards Saturday.

SPORTS BRIEF

Setter tears ACL

Sophomore Jodi Bell tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee during a loss at Washington on Saturday, Oregon head coach Carl Ferreira said Sunday.

The setter was injured in the second game of the match at Bank of America Arena after landing from an attack.

Bell's injury "will have a very significant impact on us," Ferreira said. "She's been our setter for two years and we've developed stability with her."

Bell recorded 15 assists before leaving with the injury. She is out for the season and will have an MRI today. Ferreira said "she'll definitely be ready for next season."

Oregon (3-20 overall, 0-14 Pacific-

10 Conference) dropped the match to No. 11 Washington (17-7, 8-7), 3-0 (30-14, 30-19, 30-16).

Freshman Heather Madison, an All-American setter during her senior season at Gresham High School, will now see significant playing time.

The Ducks also dropped a match at Washington State (8-18, 4-11) Friday, 3-0 (30-27, 30-19, 30-27).

— Jon Roetman