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Jon Roetman

Roughing the passer

## Holiday provides for heated contests

Hello. I hope everyone had a nice Thanksgiving.

I spent the holiday with my family in Germantown, Md. We relaxed, we stuffed ourselves, we watched sporting events on the television and we played cards.

The latter pair of events brought something to my attention: I am capable of incorporating a sport or general act of competition into any moment of my waking life.

OK. I didn't just realize this. I've known this my whole life. I'm a sports nut and a competitive freak. Is that so bad?

There are others like me. I've met them. We can't focus on a coherent thought without wondering if our team can rebound from last week's devastating loss. We can't walk by The Break in the EMU without playing seven or eight games of "Quarterback Challenge" with a friend (no one ever wants to end on a loss), and we can't help but get pissed if our mothers beat us at a hand of crazy eights.

When I travel east to visit my family, the card table is the No. 1 arena for competition. I spent last summer with them while covering sports for a newspaper in Montgomery County, Md. When the workday allowed, our schedules were coordinated to end for maximum card-playing time. Spades has always been our game of choice, with hearts mixed in as an occasional change of pace.

It gets so competitive on the card table (which doubles as a dinner table) that we often get into shouting matches, and give ice-cold glares that could break glass. And that's only what happens during momentary breaks in the action. Confrontations during games are too graphic to share.

When all is said and done, everyone knows they are loved. When the game is on, however, there is a general hate for one's opponent. Even if it's my own mother. I once got so frustrated about losing a game of spades that I had to lay down for an hour because my elevated blood pressure had sent me into an unthinkable dizzy spell (I love quality time with the family).

Spades isn't the only game where competitive fires burn bright. Along with the help of my family and friends, I have always been able to cook up some kind of novelty sports-related game. After being told to clean the backyard over the summer, I quickly turned this chore into a makeshift version of home run derby.

Using a rubber bat and a whiffle ball wrapped in duct tape, my brothers, a buddy and I turned what could have been a boring afternoon of yardwork into an epic plastic-ball-bashing-back-yard battle of monumental proportions. The contest ended when my eldest stepbrother failed to hit the plastic sphere

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## Ducks capture Classic championship

Guard Kayla Steen returned from a knee injury to add a spark for Oregon in Saturday's game

By **Mindi Rice**  
Senior Sports Reporter

Senior Kayla Steen hadn't played a minute for the Ducks this season heading into Saturday night's game against North Carolina State.

Complete with a brace on her left knee, the guard scored 11 points during her 14 minutes in the game and gave Oregon the spark it needed to overcome the Wolfpack, 83-78.

"It felt good (to have Steen back)," senior Cathrine Kraayeveld said. "I was telling her earlier that it didn't feel like I'd played with her last season because we were both kind of in and out all year last year. She's doing a great job, working her butt off in practice and I'm just happy for her to be able to come in and do such a good job and hit a couple of threes."

Steen made her two three-point attempts in the first half, with the first putting Oregon momentarily ahead, 21-20, with a little more than 10 minutes left in the half. Her second came on the Ducks' next scoring possession.

The senior guard also hit a three-point and two free throws in the game, finishing with one assist and her 11 points.

"We got back to playing team ball tonight," head coach Bev Smith said. "I really appreciated our poise this evening."

The Ducks extended their season-opening win streak to five games.

"(The Wolfpack is) very tough inside and that's one of their biggest strengths," Kraayeveld said. "We tried to focus on that and we let down a little bit — blocking out — but we tried to stick with it defensively and that was one of the keys to our game."

The Ducks had 14 personal fouls, but forced North Carolina State to commit 19. Wolfpack senior Kaayla Chones fouled out of the game with 1:27 remaining, giving the Ducks more room to work inside.

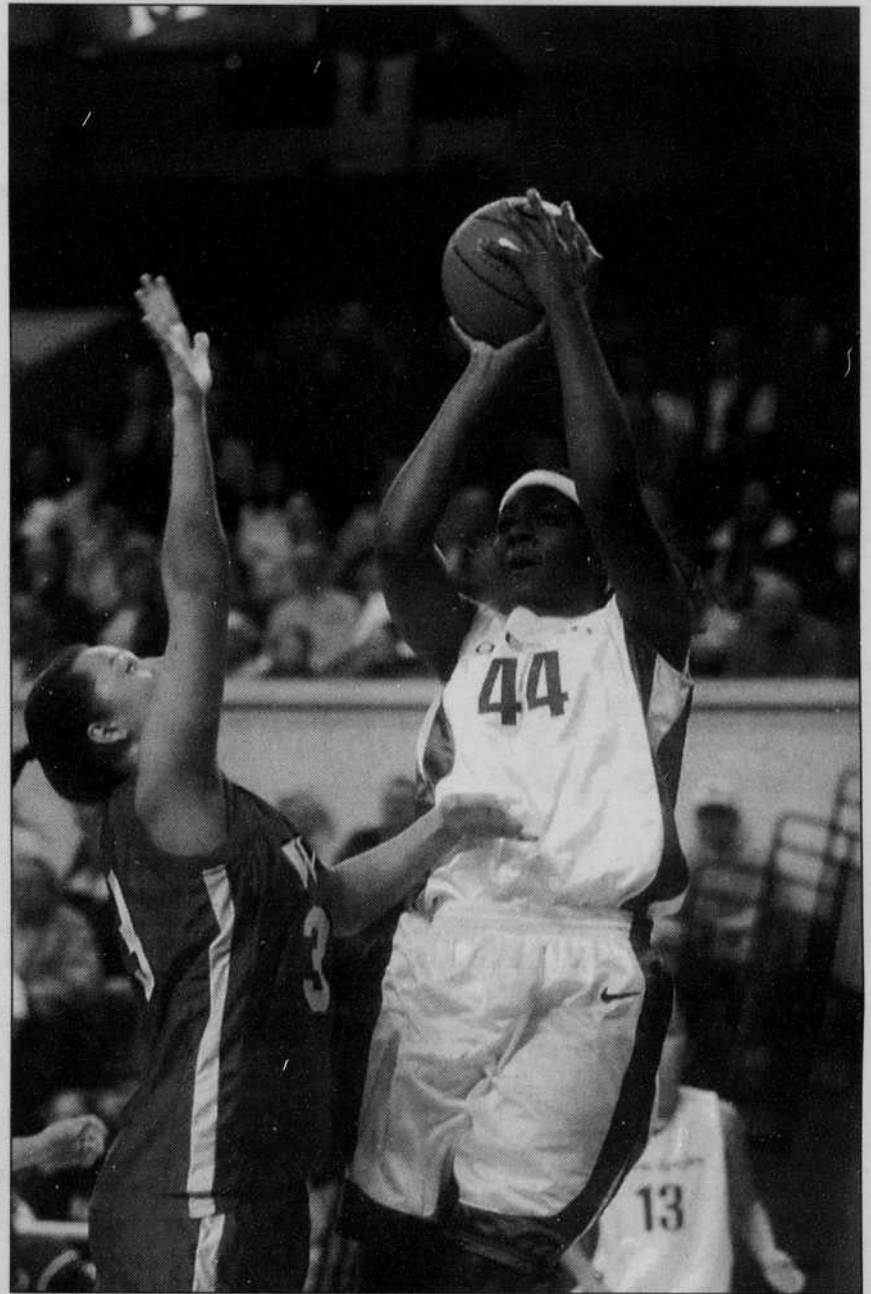
Oregon was outrebounded, 39-25. North Carolina State had 19 offensive rebounds compared to the Ducks' 20 defensively.

"They're just such an athletic team, even if you do block them out, they're able to come and jump up over you at times," Kraayeveld said. "We did a pretty good job of sticking with it and just being tough in there and going after every rebound."

The Ducks recovered from a poor shooting game Friday to hit 57 percent of their field goals and 78 percent of their free throw attempts in Saturday's game.

"We learned (Friday) night that we really have to come ready to play every night," guard Kedzie Gunderson said. "I think everyone stayed calm and we felt confidence from that."

Friday, the Ducks pulled out a close victory against Kansas,

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Danielle Hickey Senior Photographer

Andrea Bills led the Ducks with 31 points in two games at the Oregon Classic. The Ducks defeated Kansas, then North Carolina State, to win the tournament and improve to 5-0 this season.

## Muscatell, trio of former Ducks lead Sacramento State in return to McArthur

The weekend's tournament welcomed back four former Oregon stalwarts as Sacramento State coaches

By **Mindi Rice**  
Senior Sports Reporter

Former Oregon assistant coach Dan Muscatell made his return to McArthur Court for Friday and Saturday's Oregon Classic.

Muscatell's Hornets were a late addition to the tournament after Eastern Washington declined a spot to play at McArthur Court.

"We're going through a process at Sacramento State that transcends winning and losing," Muscatell, the team's head coach, said Saturday. "We have to go through some things, so for our players to get a chance to play in this environment is just absolutely special."

Sacramento State lost both of its games over the weekend. On Friday, North Carolina State handed the Hornets a 69-42 loss, and the final Saturday against Kansas came as a 70-64 loss.

For the Hornets, which won six games in the past three seasons, the increased offensive production was an improvement.

"To lose like we did (Friday) night, to not shoot the ball very well and to lose by 27, then turn around tonight and we were down at least 18 at one point and to fight back and give ourselves a chance to play for the game, that's what it's all about," Muscatell said.

"Our players are learning an entirely new language of the game of basketball — an entirely new way of playing offensively and defensively — and literally there are times when they have to stop and say 'Coach, I don't know that word' so there's a lot of learning going on. It's a steep curve."

Assisting Muscatell with that curve are three former Oregon players. Lindsey Dion, Karen Piers and Shaquala Williams made the return trip to Eugene as Hornet assistant coaches and received a warm welcome from the fans.

"The return to Mac Court was wonderful," Muscatell said. "The reception that we received from the

fans was tremendous and we can't thank them enough."

The players all played for Muscatell while he was an assistant at Oregon, giving Sacramento State's entire coaching staff a very Duck-like feel.

"I got instructed by the very best — coach (Fred Litzenger) and Muscatell and coach (Jody) Runge," Dion said. "We were very well-coached and a very disciplined basketball team, and that's what we've taken to Sac State."

Even though Oregon and Sacramento State didn't face each other in the Oregon Classic, the return of former teammates and a former coach was an added enjoyment to Thanksgiving weekend for the players and Oregon head coach Bev Smith.

"It was nice to see them, kind of a different setting," senior Cathrine Kraayeveld said. "They're doing a great job. It will take them a couple years, but (Muscatell's) going to do a great job with that program. It's fun to see old teammates out there coaching."

All the current Ducks — minus five freshmen — spent at least a

season with Muscatell as a coach and a few games with Williams, and Kraayeveld played with both Dion and Williams.

While Smith's ties to the returning Ducks aren't as strong — Muscatell was one of her assistants and Williams played a little more than a season for Smith — she recognized the importance of their appearance.

"It's nice to see that they're still involved in basketball," Smith said. "It was good to see Lindsey Dion back because she's made a lot of 'herstory' here. It was good to see that Dan's pacing the sidelines and doing those things we coaches like to do."

As for Muscatell and his Hornet assistants, some things come with the territory and some are new. Like the team, the four coaches are learning every day.

"Everything is new," Muscatell said about the head coaching experience. "Everyday you wake up and go hard, but it's a tremendous amount of fun."

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