

Tuesday, January 13, 2004



Hank Hager
Behind the dish

Beavers' success beneficial to Ducks

As easy as it would be for Oregon fans to show disdain for the loss to Oregon State in Corvallis on Saturday, the thought that the Beavers are better than they once were should bring somewhat of a smile to their face.

As hard as that is to believe, the sense that Oregon State — the Pacific-10 Conference's doormat since 1990 — may have a future is actually beneficial to the Ducks.

Oregon State head coach Jay John has given the Beavers an air of credibility. In past seasons, a 12-2 lead would have evaporated, much like it did the other day, but it wouldn't have been regained. Even though the Beavers had the likes of Philip Ricci last season, it simply did not matter.

Saturday was a harbinger of things to come for the Ducks and the Pac-10. Once you get past Stanford and Arizona, arguably the two best teams of the year in the West, the conference is a wasteland for dominance. The days of UCLA running the table are over.

As of now, only the Bruins and Cardinal have more than two wins in conference play. Arizona is close at 2-1 after a loss to Stanford, but for the most part, the league is split in the middle. The Ducks (1-2) are lumped in with the likes of Washington State, Oregon State, California and USC.

"So, while no coach will admit as much, the gap is clearly wider than ever between the two at the top and those below," Ed Graney wrote on ESPN.com last week. "Yes, the co-favorites may lose to someone other than the other over the

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New options step up for Duck offense

Chelsea Wagner and Brandi Davis provided the Ducks with an offensive lift from the perimeter; Oregon hopes to continue its offensive prowess this week in Washington

By **Jon Roetman**
Sports Reporter

Saturday's win over Oregon State was, among many things, a moment of clarity for the Oregon women's basketball team.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

For the first time since Cathrine Kraayeveld was lost to a knee injury on Dec. 2, Oregon (9-6 overall, 1-4 Pacific-10 Conference) looked like a team that knew how it wanted to score. The Ducks seemed confused at the offensive end of late, their only option being to bang the ball inside to Andrea Bills.

Saturday was different. When the Ducks needed a basket, they looked to Chelsea Wagner and Brandi Davis to deliver.

Wagner was successful at getting open on the perimeter, knocking down five three-point shots. Davis was able to create her own shots off the dribble, connecting on several off-balance jumpers.

The duo combined for 31 points and seven three-pointers, but more importantly, Oregon might have found the scoring punch the team needs to improve its 61 points per game average.

"It felt pretty good out there," Wagner said after the game. "My teammates did a really good job (of finding me). Most of my shots, I was pretty open. I better knock 'em down if I'm open."

Davis said she felt good as well.

"I felt a lot of confidence," Davis said. "I was really determined to go out there and hit some key baskets for us."

Another bonus to having several players shoulder the scoring load was taking some of the pressure off of Bills. The junior center is Oregon's leading scorer, rebounder and shot blocker and is the only Duck averaging double figures in points per game. Bills has connected on 78 field goal attempts, 36 more than her closest teammate.

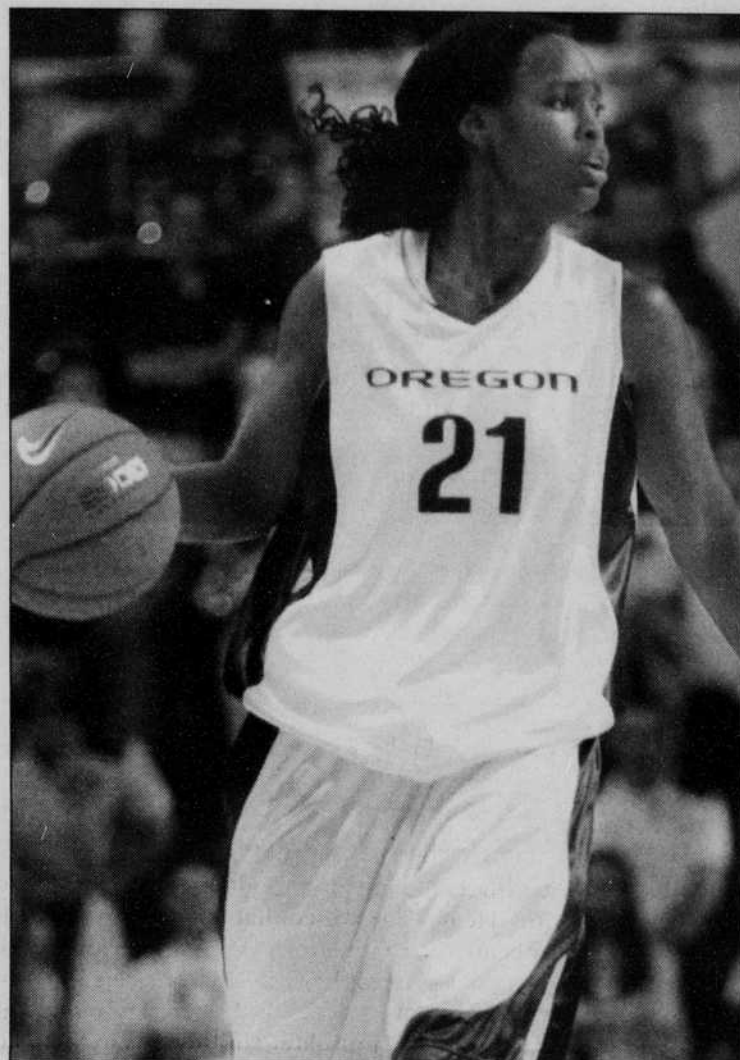
"You can tell (perimeter) baskets just lift us," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said. "Right now we have a very tired young lady in Andrea Bills, who is working her behind off, but the fruits of her labor aren't paying off. I think if we can get her some rest and hit those outside shots, then defensively they can't focus on her."

Areas of improvement

Oregon improved on two areas of concern Saturday.

The Ducks' most noticeable upgrade was how they were able to handle pressure defense. Oregon players stayed calm in the face of the Beaver press, taking the necessary time to make smart passes and move the ball up court. This is something that had been missing earlier in the year, including a loss to UCLA on Jan. 4, when the Ducks blew a 14-point second-half lead.

Oregon's other step forward was not allowing itself to fall into an early hole. The Ducks had made a habit of falling behind big early and never being able to catch up. While Oregon didn't shoot the lights out early



Tim Kupsick Photographer

Junior guard Brandi Davis scored 16 points Saturday against Oregon State; 12 of which came in the game's final nine minutes.

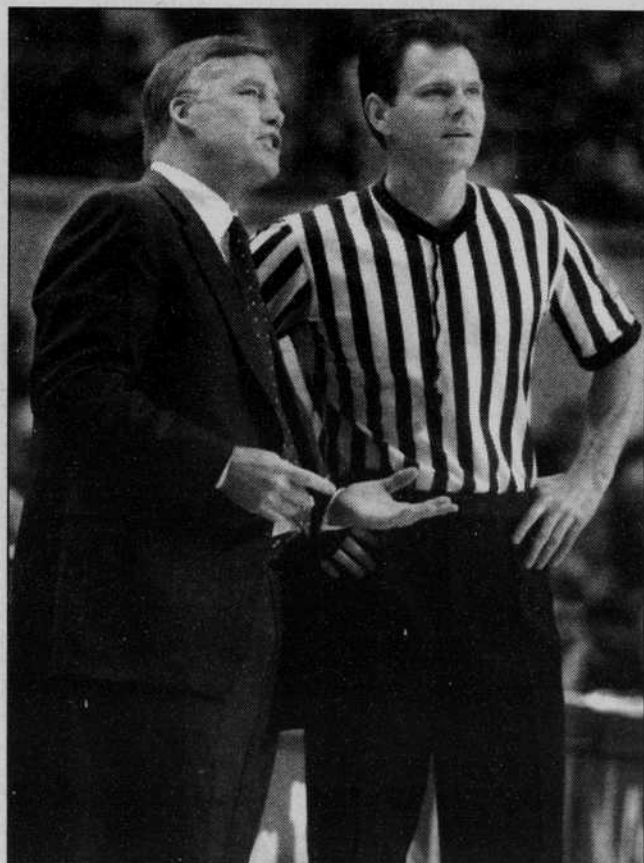
against Oregon State, the Ducks kept themselves close enough to make a run at the end of the game. The Beavers' lead reached six in the first half and eight in the second.

Strong defense

Defense has been Oregon's focus since the first day of practice.

Smith has been quick to praise Wagner and Kedzie Gunderson for their efforts in shutting down the opposition's best player. The Ducks will need a total team effort Thursday when they face Washington at the Bank of America Arena. The Huskies feature two of the Pac-10's top four scorers in Giuliana Mendiola and Andrea Lalum. Mendiola, the 2002-03 Pac-10 Player of the Year, is second in the conference with 19.6 points

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Stanford head coach Mike Montgomery has led the Cardinal to a 13-0 start this season. Stanford defeated Arizona by 10 on Saturday to take the lead in the Pac-10 and as favorites for a top seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Adam Amato
Senior
Photographer

Montgomery leads Stanford men to perfect start after latest victory

The Cardinal are beginning to look like the favorite to take the Pac-10 crown

By **Hank Hager**
Sports Editor

Undefeated.

The word rolls off the tongue. That's the case at Stanford, where an

MEN'S BASKETBALL

82-72 win over No. 3 Arizona on Saturday pushed the Cardinal to 13-0 this season, including a 4-0 record in Pacific-10 Conference play.

It has become customary for Stanford to start off the season strong. And if it sounds like 13-0 is a huge accomplishment, it is. But not necessarily for the Cardinal, who have had a tendency under

head coach Mike Montgomery to start off strong.

To start off the 2000-01 season, Stanford went 20-0 before ending the year 31-3, losing to Maryland 87-73 in the fourth round of the NCAA Tournament.

The year before that, the Cardinal jumped out to a 12-0 start before losing to Arizona. In 1997-98, Montgomery led them to 18 straight wins before a loss.

And so on and so on and so on.

This year's 13 straight has come with wins against Kansas, Gonzaga and the Wildcats, who were considered the runaway pick to win the Pac-10 this season.

The Cardinal scrambled that prediction.

"They did the little things that it takes to win," Arizona center Channing Frye told the Arizona Daily

Wildcat. "They just put on a clinic, moving without the ball."

Stanford makes no bones about its ability to remain cool, calm and collected on the court. On the cover of its media guide, forwards Justin Davis and Joe Kirchofer and guard Matt Lottich stand with basketballs by their side and arms folded, eyes covered by sunglasses.

"They must have to have a pretty high GPA to get in there or something," Arizona head coach Lute Olson was quoted as saying in the Associated Press, "because they really play with poise and intelligence. A lot of that has to do with Mike, too."

The road gets no easier for Stanford, however, when it plays traditional rival California on Saturday at Maples Pavilion.

The Golden Bears haven't won at Stanford since an 86-61 victory

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