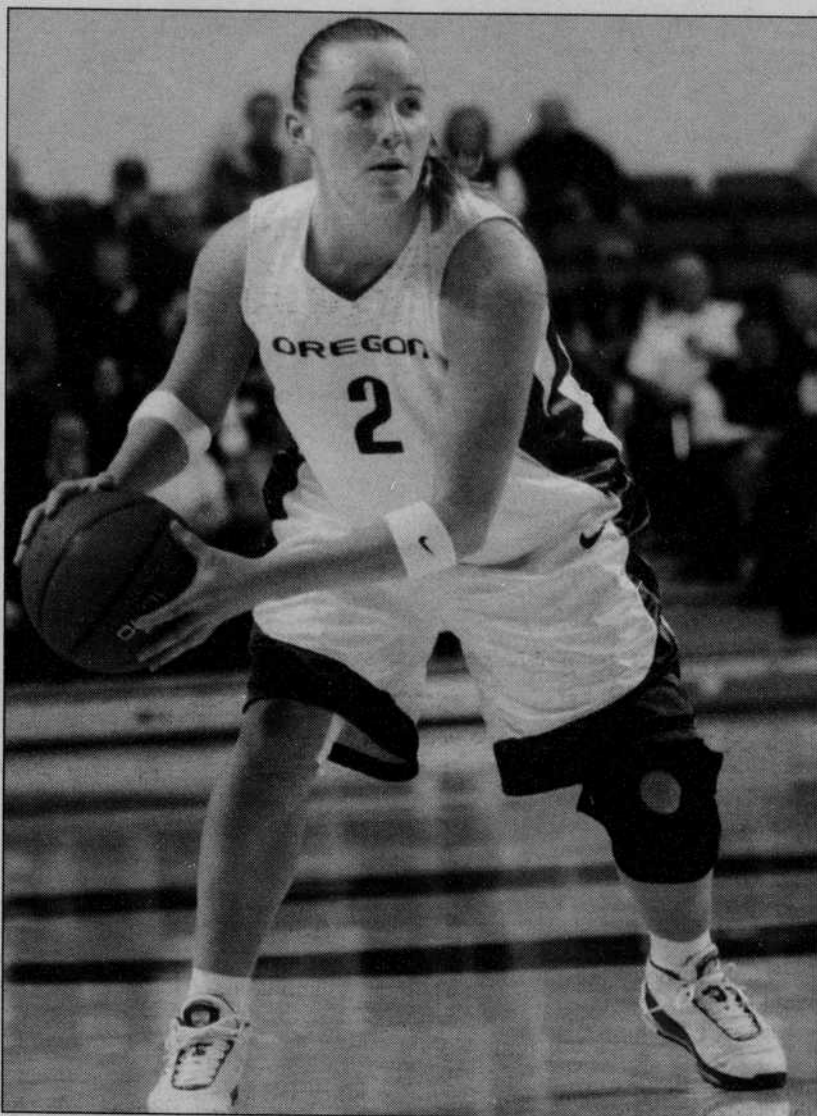


Tuesday, January 27, 2004



Chelsea Wagner made 10 three-pointers in Oregon's last two games, but the Ducks were not able to capitalize in either contest. Wagner is in her first season with Oregon after transferring from Hawaii prior to last season.

Erik Bishoff
Photographer

Wagner's play keeps Ducks warm early on

Oregon guard Chelsea Wagner has found her niche from the perimeter and has benefited from it

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

Chelsea Wagner has established herself as the scoring threat that Oregon has so desperately needed.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

During the last five games, the sophomore guard has averaged 11.4 points and knocked down 16 of 38 three-point attempts.

Battling a torn lateral meniscus in her left knee, the Springfield native has hit 10 three-pointers in the last two games.

Wagner's recent success didn't come without struggle. She suffered an ankle injury in the preseason, bringing her practice time and conditioning to a halt. She saw limited playing time early in the season and had trouble fitting into the offensive flow.

It's safe to say that Wagner has found a comfort zone.

Her perimeter scoring has taken some of the pressure off Andrea Bills inside and has opened up lanes for teammates to drive through.

"I definitely have a little more confidence in my shot," Wagner said. "We needed

someone to go out there and extend the defense a little bit to get (Bills) open a little bit more. I just kind of took that upon myself and I've been quite fortunate that they've been dropping for me."

Closing time

Oregon (10-9 overall, 2-7 Pacific-10 Conference) used the last three games to address several areas of concern.

The Ducks seemed to solve their problems with scoring, rebounding and handling pressure defense during the three-game stretch, but they have stumbled onto a new problem: They can't hold a lead.

Oregon held second-half leads against Arizona and Arizona State last week but were unable to close out either opponent.

The Ducks had a late six-point lead against the Wildcats but were outscored 11-1 during the game's final five minutes. Oregon was up by eight on the Sun Devils with 3:59 remaining but was outscored 13-3 down the stretch.

"We need to do what we've done for 40 minutes," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said. "Not wait until the other team catches up and then try to do some last-minute heroics because that's too late."

Despite the losses, the Ducks have drastically improved their rebounding effort. Oregon has held its own in the paint after being dominated earlier in the season. The Ducks have out-rebounded their opponents 107-104

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Hank Hager
Behind the dish

ESPN still tops heap of sports channels

I had an unusually hard time writing this column today.

After all, I've only got a few subjects to think about. Who could possibly write something interesting about the Super Bowl, Oregon's loss to Arizona a few days ago, or the fact that the Blazers are sinking — and fast?

What about the fact that the Oregon women's basketball team can't seem to buy a win, and the fact that Arizona State — the most recent predator of the Duck — had as many Oregon natives on the team as Oregon did? That's true, by the way.

Nope, couldn't do it. Couldn't bring myself to discuss who I think will win the Super Bowl. It's not like it would matter anyway. The commercials are the only thing people really look forward to.

I know that's what I'm going to watch the game for. I really do want to know what that cute little AFLAC duck is going to do. We should all be proud that the company has provided us with a mascot that is so close to home.

Nope, still couldn't write about that.

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Wildcats triumph over Pac-10 teams

Arizona is back on the winning track with three straight wins and the nation's top offense to boot

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

Ninth-ranked Arizona has got a new attitude. The Wildcats are playing like they like to play, dominating their opponent.

Arizona holds no shame in defeating a team by 30 or more points. The Wildcats have won three in a row after having dropped two in a row mid-season.

In a three-game span, Arizona is averaging more than 98 points a game. The Wildcats have had a margin of victory of more than 27 points in the past three contests.

It's a vicious offense with vicious speed that is tough for any opponent to defend.

"We are definitely one of the best teams in the country, but we have to play that way and show it," freshman point guard Mustafa Shakur said after Arizona's 109-75 victory over Oregon State on Thursday. "We need to rip a team apart from beginning to end."

Arizona's 109-point total was its highest output this season. The Wildcats have topped the 100-point total three times this season, not including exhibition games.

And the players are loving every minute of it. Junior Salim Stoudamire is relishing it.

"Salim is in a positive mode," Arizona head coach Lute Olson said. "You can just see it out there. He's happy for the team playing well. His New Year's resolution of being positive is important to him, and it's really important to us."

While Stoudamire sparks the offense, 6-foot-4 Hassan Adams has been enjoying his role on defense. Adams' vertical leap has amazed many and it helped the sophomore to earn four second-half blocks against the Beavers.

"A block is way more fun than a dunk," Adams

said. "It's defense. If you get a big block it rolls after that. A dunk is all love, but once you get the block, it's all defense."

Conference bottoms out

Rather than contest a spot for the lead in the Pacific-10 Conference against undefeated Stanford, four conference teams are competing for the worst conference record.

Oregon State, Arizona State, Washington and Washington State have all collided in the pit of the conference with a combined 8-20 record. The four schools are tied for seventh place with 2-5 records.

On the weekend, the Sun Devils took a split in losing to Oregon and defeating the Beavers. Oregon State lost two straight to the Arizona schools and Washington took a 13-point win over the Cougars.

It's been a bumpy conference ride so far as five teams have sub-.500 conference records. USC is at 3-5 in conference play and sits at sixth place.

At the top of the conference, below 8-0 Stanford, UCLA and Arizona sit in a tie for second with 5-3 records while Oregon and Cal are tied for fourth, both at 4-3 in the conference.

In her memory

The California's men's basketball team played in memory of a fallen women's basketball player in Saturday night's 76-62 victory against UCLA.

Cal women's basketball player Alisa Lewis died Jan. 19 from bacterial meningitis, an infection of the covering of the brain and spinal cord.

The Golden Bears' men's team wore small black patches on the front of their uniforms that read "AL 31" in memory of Lewis, who wore No. 31 on the basketball court.

Player of the Week

California freshman Leon Powe has been named the Pacific-10 Conference Men's Basketball Player of the Week for January 19-25.

The forward from Oakland, Calif., averaged 16.5 points and 11 rebounds in a home sweep of USC and UCLA this weekend.



Chris Coduto Arizona Daily Wildcat

Channing Frye (45) and Arizona knocked off Oregon on Sunday, putting the Wildcats in a tie with UCLA for the second-place spot in the Pacific-10 Conference.

Against the Trojans, Powe scored 14 points on 6 of 11 shooting with eight rebounds. Powe turned 20 on Thursday, the day of the game.

Against the Bruins, he posted his league-leading eighth double-double with 19 points and 14 rebounds. He also added a pair of steals and an assist.

Powe is averaging 15.5 points per game and a league-best 9.7 rebounds per game. It is the 20th time in league history that a freshman has received the honor.

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