

MEN

continued from page 7

State started a stretch run that kept Oregon scoreless for five minutes.

All the while jumping out to a four-point lead that it never fully relinquished.

"I thought our team did a good job of managing the game," Arizona State head coach Rob Evans said. "They showed patience. When you do that, you give your club a chance to win ball games."

While the Sun Devils showed patience, the Ducks did not. En route to the 38 three-point attempts, Oregon showed little poise down

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Rob Evans
Arizona State head coach

low. The Ducks' big men — Ian Crosswhite, Mitch Platt, Jay Anderson and Matt Short — combined for 21 points and 10 rebounds.

Diogu had 23 points and 12 rebounds on his own.

"They hit some big shots, killed us on the boards and had a lot of second-chance points," Kent said.

Jackson had 16 points two days after a career-high 42 against Arizona. He shot 6 of 13 from the floor and was a key piece of the offen-

sive puzzle that Arizona State focused on during the game.

The Sun Devils didn't disappoint. Jackson scored just seven points in the second half.

"We knew where he was," Evans said. "We were going to make sure we knew where he and (James) Davis were."

Which, Jackson would say, is frustrating. "For me, every game is just so important," Jackson said. "It's hard not to put everything I have into every game."

Davis picked up some of the slack left by Jackson, scoring 18 points on the strength of 6 of 15 shooting from beyond the three-point line. The 15 attempts tied a school-record.

"This was a big game," Davis said. "We let a lot of opportunities get away from us. They're trying to fight their butt off to get to the Pac-10 (Tournament)."

Now comes the hard part. With California losing to Southern California on Saturday, the Ducks remain in a tie for fourth place with the Golden Bears in the Pac-10.

But unlike most years, a fourth place finish in the conference will not suffice when aiming for the NCAA Tournament.

The consensus is that the Ducks need to win their last four games — including road contests against Stanford and California — and win the Pac-10 Tournament to get a bid.

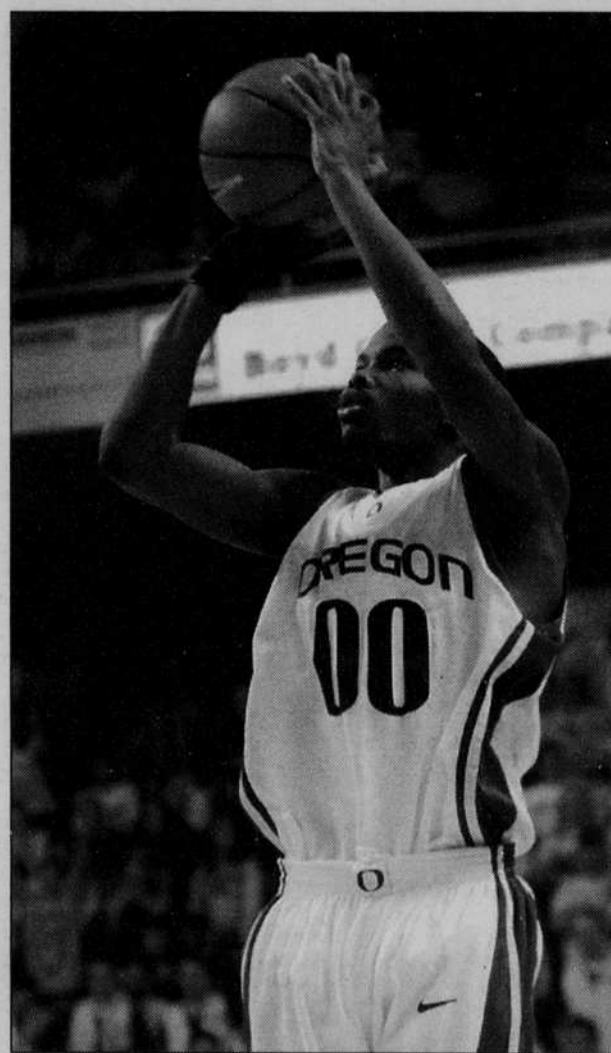
That will be tough, to say the least.

"We've just got to fight," Davis said. "We haven't been playing with a sense of urgency. We have to have more fire when we're out there."

"We've got to play for ourselves and our pride."

Four games are left to prove that.

Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.



Erik Bishoff Photographer

Aaron Brooks takes one of Oregon's 38 three-pointers, a school record.

THOMAS

continued from page 7

Oregon has two chances to make it. And only two.

Right now, at best, Oregon finishes the regular season 16-9 overall and 11-7 in conference. Of course, that's if Oregon beats Stanford on the road. So, 15-10 and 10-8 seems more probable, meaning Oregon beats Cal on the road and finishes with home wins against USC and UCLA.

And 15-win teams don't receive bids to the Big Dance.

So here are Oregon's two chances of making the NCAA Tournament for the third consecutive year.

1) Win out — meaning the Ducks beat Stanford. It would be a miracle, Oregon would receive national attention, and most importantly, the Ducks would have their first quality win against a top-25

team this season.

Defeating Stanford would help to move Oregon from on the bubble to inside the bubble.

2) Win the Pac-10 Tournament. Oregon did it last year, and it gives the Ducks an automatic berth into the NCAA Tournament. Not an easy task, but if the Ducks did it once they can definitely do it again.

And for chance number three — I know, I thought of another one — if Oregon just plays basketball, plays for the love of basketball, plays with the potential that is there, and doesn't play for postseason, the Ducks just might make it.

"This team, we're playing for the Oregon Ducks, for the name on the front," Oregon guard James Davis said. "If we do that, we'll be fine."

The Ducks are beginning to make a believer out of me.

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com.



Erik Bishoff Photographer

Luke Jackson (33) and the Ducks bow their heads after an 11-point loss. Oregon fell to 7-7 in Pac-10 play this season, which will most likely relegate the Ducks to the NIT.

SPORTS BRIEF

Avalanche roll past Wild

ST. PAUL, Minn. — In hockey parlance, the maneuver is called a can opener. For the Minnesota Wild, it was just another way to get skewered.

There were plenty of blown chances for the Wild to scrutinize in assessing Sunday's 3-1 loss to the Colorado Avalanche in front of 18,568 at the Xcel Energy Center.

But it was a play involving the figurative kitchen utensil that left them fuming, especially defenseman Willie Mitchell, about a so-called double standard when it comes to policing the league's aristocrats and the rest of the NHL proletariat.

Late in the second period, Avs superstar Paul Kariya hooked Mitchell to the ice to clear a path for him to crash the net, where Joe Sakic sent a pass that ricocheted off Brad Bombardir's skate and squirted through Dwayne Roloson for what turned out to be the winning goal.

No call by referees Terry Gregson or Rob Martell.

Zero tolerance from Mitchell.

"You know how it is in the league. Two sets of rules. It's Paul Kariya, so (they) don't call things that cost us the game. It was obvious. Blatantly obvious," Mitchell hissed afterward. "He had his stick right between my legs. Twisted my legs and pulled down my shoulder. To say that caused a goal, I don't know. But there definitely should have been a call on the play. The play would have been dead."

Kariya's can opener gutted the Wild, who were thwarted by Avs goalie David Aebischer (24 saves) and a short-circuiting power play that remains the league's least efficient at home.

The Wild outshot Colorado 25-14, only the 16th game this season they have outshot an opponent. And they still lost.

"We were playing a team that was the best in the NHL. You give them 14-15 shots, five chances ... thank you very much. We'll take that any day," Wild coach Jacques Lemaire said.

The Wild had five power plays, including a four-minute advantage when the score was tied 1-1. And they still lost.

— Brian Murphy
Knight Ridder Newspapers

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