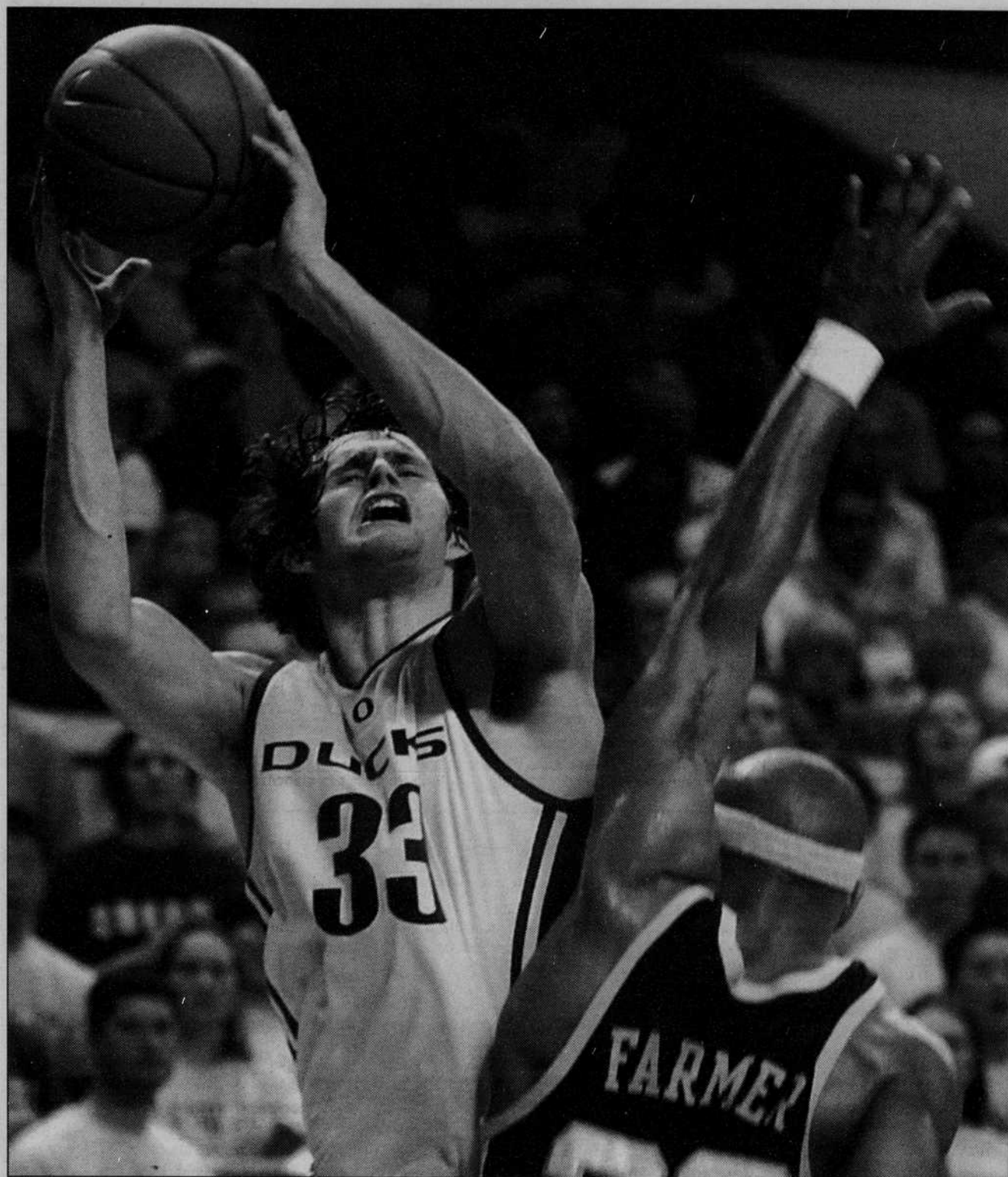


Friday, March 5, 2004

Oregon clinches Pac-10 Tournament berth



Adam Amato Senior Photographer

It was a record-breaking night for senior Luke Jackson. Jackson became the first player in Oregon history with three 500-point seasons.

The Ducks start slow, but dominate the second half in a five-point victory over USC on Thursday

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

Yeah, Luke Jackson admitted, he was a little bit worried about the outcome of Oregon's game against Southern California Thursday.

After a start to the game that saw the Trojans pull ahead by as much as 10, the Ducks looked flat, uninspired and on a straight shot to lose their fifth game in a row.

So much for that.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Oregon eventually caught its rhythm, tied the game and dominated the second half en route to a 75-70 victory over USC in front of a sold-out 9,087 at McArthur Court.

"It took us a little while to get in our rhythm," Jackson said. "We're a tough team to beat when we have confidence at home."

The win is a sigh of relief for the Ducks, whose four-game slide in the last two weeks gave the impression Oregon would miss the postseason all together.

That would have meant the NCAA, NIT and Pacific-10 Conference tournaments. Not any more. Oregon can now at least book its flight to Los Angeles next week. The win over USC (12-14 overall, 7-10 Pac-10) gave the team its eighth win of the season, enough to clinch a berth in the tournament.

The eighth win that has teased the Ducks during the team's last four games, all losses.

"It definitely feels good," Oregon guard James Davis said. "Me and 'Dre (Andre Joseph) were talking in the locker room and (said), 'Man, it feels good to win,' and that isn't a good feeling to have because since I've been here and 'Dre has been here we've been on a successful basketball team. We're definitely not used to consecutive losses like that."

The laundry list of issues the Ducks faced during the four-game losing streak were pushed to the side when they faced the Trojans.

Davis found his shot again and Oregon (13-11, 8-9) learned it has to play some semblance of defense — especially down the stretch — to win games.

Davis, who came into the game having scored in double-digits just once in Oregon's last seven games, started slow but warmed up as the game went on. He was 5 of 8 from beyond the three-point line, moving him into second place on Oregon's career three-pointers list.

He now has 226 in four seasons with the Ducks.

"When you've got your coaches and teammates constantly telling you to keep shooting it, that gives you all the confidence in the world," Davis said. "And tonight, it was a relief to finally hit some."

While Davis warmed up from the outside, USC's Desmon Farmer did not. The guard scored 16 points in the first half, but connected for nine in the second. He was 4 of 11 from the field in the second half and 1 for 5 from the three-point line.

"I tried to limit his touches as much as possible," Joseph said. "You know he'll shoot it about 99 percent of the time he gets it, so you've got to get up on him and hope he doesn't get the ball. When he does get it, try to play the best defense you can."

The Ducks learned against the Trojans that sharing the ball

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Ducks face similar foe in Cal

Oregon faces California in the Pac-10 tournament today, six days after closing the regular season against the Bears

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

Oregon is going to try it again.

After facing California on Saturday and picking up a 77-62 victory, the Ducks and the Golden Bears play each other today in the first round of the Pacific-10 Conference tournament.

"Our plan is to just go in, play the first game and win the first game," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said. "We're very focused on Cal and on playing well."

The Ducks (14-14 overall, 6-12 Pac-10) opened their conference season with a 61-57 loss to California (11-16, 4-14). When the two teams closed their regular seasons in Eugene, the result was very dif-

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

ferent.

Oregon put together its first consecutive conference wins of the season when the momentum of a 67-66 victory against No. 10 Stanford carried over

into the victory against the Golden Bears.

"Saturday's game showed us what we are capable of doing against Cal as long as we play as hard as we did that night," Oregon center Andrea Bills said. "You can never be overprepared because each team may add something different to their game. We definitely cannot take Cal lightly. They will be ready and build on things they may not have gotten done in the previous game, and we have to match that."

The Golden Bears and the Ducks seemed to be more than one place apart in the Pac-10 standings when the two teams met Saturday at McArthur Court. Bills led Oregon with 10 rebounds and a career-high 22 points. With 3 minutes and 21 seconds remaining in the first half, the junior scored a basket to put Oregon ahead, 29-28, and the Ducks didn't look back.

In a very physical and emotional game, California head coach Caren Horstmeyer was called for a technical foul in the second half. The Ducks were into a bonus situation with fouls in the first ten minutes of the second half. Saturday was also senior Kayla Steen's last game at McArthur Court.

The Ducks aren't looking past the Bears.

"They could make adjustments," Smith said. "We can only control what we do to play well. They're a

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NCAA Tournament bid up for grabs in San Jose

The Pac-10 Tournament allows teams one final chance to earn a berth into the NCAA version

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

Think of the women's Pacific-10 Conference Tournament as a potential four-day do-over.

It's a chance for teams that struggled through the season to suddenly catch fire and earn an automatic berth to the NCAA Tournament.

With the conference's supposed dominant team, Stanford, struggling at the end of the regular season, it appears every team has a shot at winning the tournament title.

Games begin tonight, starting with No. 7 Oregon State taking on No. 10 Washington State, which is followed by No. 8 Oregon against No. 9 California. Play will last through the weekend, concluding with

Monday's championship game.

1. Stanford (21-6 overall, 14-4 Pac-10)

The Cardinal enters as the tournament favorite after grabbing a share of its fourth consecutive conference title.

Stanford is led by Pac-10 Player of the Year Nicole Powell, who averaged a double-double during the regular season.

Powell, who is one of the nation's top players, is often relied upon to supply the majority of the Cardinal's offensive output. This was a problem for

Stanford late in the season as opponents focused on shutting down Powell and her teammates couldn't deliver.

Stanford will face the winner of Oregon

PAC 10

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