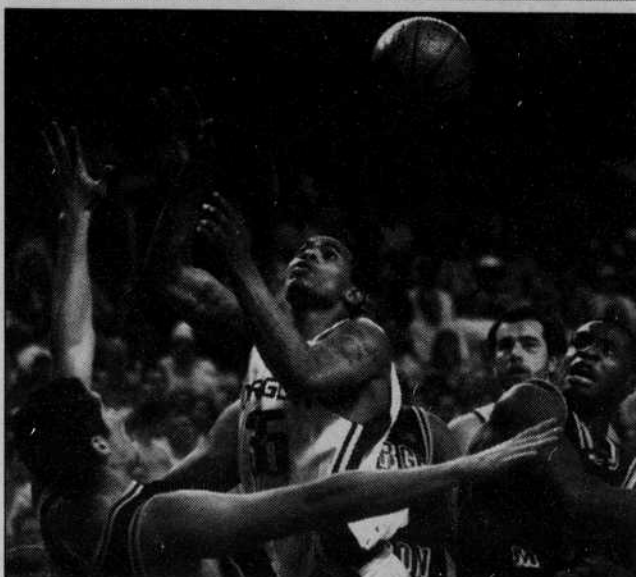




Guard Andre Joseph has stepped up his play during the Ducks' NIT run.

Erik R. Bishoff
Photographer

BASKETBALL

continued from page 9

got his defender in the air, leaned in, and it didn't even hit the rim, I was dumbfounded. I didn't know what to think."

On to George Mason the Ducks went, hoping to extend their season even further.

Maybe it was a contest, maybe it wasn't. The CAA's third-place team won 23 games entering the game against Oregon, looking like it would be a worthy opponent.

Oregon used its patented run-and-gun offense to keep the Patriots at bay.

The 1,000th game in 78-year McArthur Court was the perfect setting for Jackson's final game in Eugene. He didn't take the game over like his effort against Colorado, but instead gave way to Joseph, who paced Oregon with 22 points.

Oregon pulled away early and didn't trail in the second half.

"We did a good job of getting the lead early," Jackson said. "It made it a little more comfortable during their run down the stretch."

Finally, with a trip to New York on the line, Oregon traveled to South Bend, Ind., on Thursday. Notre Dame, coming off a 77-66 win over St. Louis the night before Oregon's triumph over George Mason, was hosting its third game of the NIT.

In other words, the Fighting Irish started off the NIT with two wins in the state of Indiana — one in Fort Wayne, another at the Joyce Center in South Bend.

Oregon, meanwhile, entered the game with a 4-6 road record, having

last defeated a team on its home court on Feb. 14, a five-point overtime victory over Washington State.

The Ducks and Fighting Irish played neck-and-neck basketball in the first half. Both teams entered the break with 32 points.

Oregon pulled ahead within the first six minutes of the second half and never fully relinquished that lead. The Ducks held a nine-point lead late in the game, only to see that evaporate to two with a minute left.

After Jackson missed a layup that would have put the Ducks up by four, Notre Dame grabbed the rebound and began to push the ball upcourt.

Torrian Jones expected Chris Thomas to make a cut and passed the ball, only to see it go off Thomas' hands and out of bounds in Notre Dame's backcourt.

All with 13 seconds left.

Oops.

Thus came the evolution of Oregon's 2003-04 postseason.

"This team was pretty good when we played Southern California, when we were whole," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "We were spectacular down there."

"We thought we had the makings of an exceptional basketball team when everything came together. It has just taken us a little while longer to get there because of our injuries and sure enough, we've won six out of seven and our only loss has been to the No. 1 team in the nation (Stanford), which was a tie game with 2 minutes, 31 seconds to go."

Oregon opens up at Madison Square Garden Tuesday against Michigan.

Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

University of Oregon Bookstore ANNUAL MEETING

3:00 p.m. FIR ROOM, EMU Tuesday, April 13, 2004

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