

"He should be fresh, and he should be light. Light in the pockets."

Detroit guard Chauncey Billups on Ben Wallace returning after serving a suspension that cost him \$400,000

■ In my opinion



CLAYTON JONES
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

Past teams should not be confused with present

The Oregon men's basketball team has started its season in a nice fashion at 3-0 with an upcoming game against Vanderbilt on the horizon at the Papé Jam in Portland.

They've defeated a good New Mexico team at home and have beat up on two cupcake teams to get to where they are now.

So how good is this team?

In my eyes they have exceeded expectation, but one thing wrong with other people's expectations is that they compare this team to Oregon teams of the past, especially the Elite Eight team of 2001-02.

That's not fair.

I've heard on numerous occasions that this team is "in better shape than the Elite Eight team," or that they are "a better defensive squad than the Elite Eight team," but I'm afraid that all of you who are comparing this team to that team are completely off track.

This is not that team.

Not even close.

This year's squad hasn't won anything yet.

Talented: yes.

Proven: no.

Go back in the time machine with me to the 2001-02 season.

The Ducks went 26-9 for the season. They defended Mac Court perfectly with a 16-0 record (the first time since 1937-38).

Most importantly, they had Luke, Luke and Fred.

Who can forget when Oregon faced Wake Forest in the NCAA tournament and the trio combined for 81 (Jackson 29, Ridnour 28, Jones 24) of the team's 92 points.

Or the Texas game when Jones, despite only having two points for the previous 39 minutes, drove through the lane and scored the game-winning basket with 2.8 seconds left to propel Oregon to a 72-70 victory — and a spot in the Elite Eight.

Don't get me wrong: I'm not bashing this season's Oregon team at all.

One of my favorite things about this squad is that it doesn't want to be those teams. Red-shirt freshman Ray Schafer told me the 2004-05 Ducks don't want to be compared to teams of the past; they are their own team.

Yes, they still have the uptempo style and great scoring talent like previous teams, but they are different.

One thing they are missing is a big, tough presence in the middle that makes little guards think twice about coming inside.

A Robert Johnson or a Brian Helquist type of player. Someone that can do the dirty work in the interior and has the size to push some bodies around.

Mitch Platt could be that guy for the Ducks. He's big (6-foot-10, 265 pounds), and if he gets healthy and gets a little bit of a mean streak in him, he could be the enforcer the Ducks need.

But remember, this team is young. It will take its bumps and bruises, and to hold it to the same expectation as past teams is unreasonable.

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■ Men's basketball

Away game, home advantage

Oregon will face Vanderbilt in a Portland arena expected to house mostly Duck fans at the Papé Jam

BY JON ROETMAN
SENIOR SPORTS REPORTER

The traveling show of athleticism that is the Oregon men's basketball team is ready to take its act to a grander stage.

The Ducks (3-0 overall) take on Vanderbilt (4-2) during Saturday's seventh annual Papé Jam at the Rose Garden in Portland. The men's game tips off at 4 p.m. following the completion of the women's game.

While McArthur Court provides Oregon with an electric playing atmosphere, there's something about stepping onto the Rose Garden floor that brings out the best in the Ducks, who are undefeated in their previous six games at the Blazers' home arena.

"I think the fact that it's a pro arena (gets our players excited)," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "The fact that it's the city up there and a bigger group of fans up there, it's an element that allows us to play up."

After winning their first three games of the season, the Ducks face a Commodore team that reached the Sweet 16 of last season's NCAA Tournament before falling to eventual national champion Connecticut, 73-53. Junior guard Mario Moore is the team's biggest scoring threat. A returning starter, Moore is averaging 16.2 points per game.

Vanderbilt also has 7-foot-2 center Dawid Przybyszewski, who spends a lot of time around the perimeter and is capable of knocking down the long-range shot. The senior is averaging 9.2 points and 6.5 rebounds per game.

As a team, Kent said Vanderbilt's offense is comparable to Princeton's, as the Commodores

spread the floor and rely on precise passing and backdoor cuts.

"They're every bit as good as any team we've had up there," Kent said. "They're really going to have us on our toes."

While the game is supposedly held on a neutral site, Kent said the Ducks will look to use thousands of screaming Oregon fans to their advantage.

"It's a road game in terms of our preparation and approach," Kent said. "I'll remind (our players) before game time that it's a road game, but by the way, we have 13,000 fans with us."

Offensively, Oregon has been on fire from three-point range. Guards Aaron Brooks and Bryce Taylor have exposed defenses that leave the perimeter open as each is shooting better than 42 percent from behind the arc. While the Ducks have been hot as of late, it is important that they learn from past failures and do not become dependent on the long-range shot.

"We can't live and die (with the three-point shot) because in the past, it's hurt us," forward Ian Crosswhite said. "We haven't had any inside play. This year, we have big guys who can score."

Crosswhite is one of four Ducks averaging more than 10 points per game. The 6-foot-11 junior is averaging 13.3 points per contest, while Brooks (17), Taylor (13.3) and guard Malik Hairston (13.7) are also averaging double figures.

Another big man who has stepped up for Oregon is redshirt freshman Ray Schafer. The 7-foot center acknowledged that the Ducks need to continue pounding the ball inside but will gladly take the three-point shot if it's open.



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Sophomore point guard Aaron Brooks is one of four Ducks averaging more than 10 points per game this season. Oregon takes on Vanderbilt Saturday at the Rose Garden in Portland.

"That's what (Marshall) gave us, so we took what they gave us," Schafer said of Oregon's 13 threes against the Thundering Herd last Saturday. "We fed the post, but they took that away."

Saturday's game against Vanderbilt will be Oregon's final tune-up

before a showdown with No. 5 Illinois on Dec. 11 in Chicago. Illinois defeated No. 1 Wake Forest 91-73 on Wednesday. Illinois is considered one of the favorites to compete for a national championship.

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■ Women's basketball

Ducks seek vengeance on Colonials

Oregon looks to avenge a 72-52 loss to George Washington last season at Saturday's Papé Jam

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

A highly anticipated sequel between the women of Oregon and George Washington will take place during the Papé Jam at the Rose Garden on Saturday.

The Ducks (4-0) are one of only two undefeated teams in the Pacific-10 Conference, and they go to Portland this weekend with an all-time record of 6-0 at the Papé Jam.

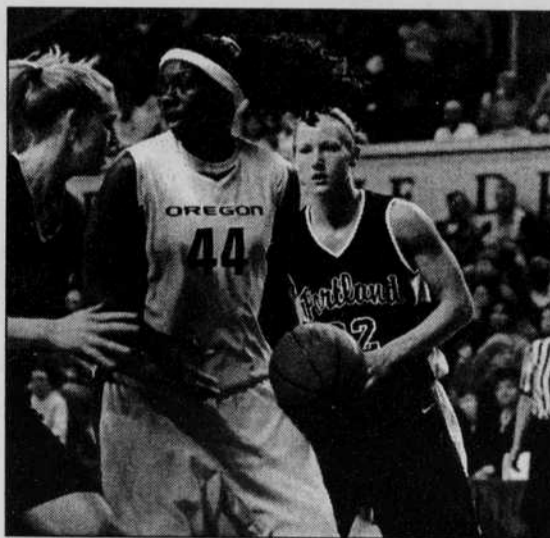
Last season, the Colonials (3-1) defeated the Ducks 72-52 on their home court. Oregon center Andrea Bills made only 2 of 11 shots from the floor and did not score until the final four minutes of the game. The team committed 18 turnovers.

"It was just a bad game in general," Oregon senior Corrie Mizusawa said. "We didn't come ready to play."

According to Mizusawa, the memories of that contest have not affected Oregon's winning mentality this season.

"We have a lot of motivation for the (upcoming) game considering they kicked our butts last year, so we're definitely ready to go," she said. "We're 4-0 right now and feeling pretty confident. It's just a matter of doing what we always do, which is focusing on defense and rebounding and getting the ball up the court."

Oregon's defense and rebounding have been respectable so far. The Ducks have held opponents to a shooting percentage just under 40 percent, and they bring down three more rebounds per game on average. George Washington allows 54.8 points per game, and its field goal defense has restrained opponents to a



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Oregon center Andrea Bills, seen here against Portland, says her team will focus on rebounding this weekend. The senior is averaging 5.8 rebounds per game.

33.7 shooting percentage.

On the offensive end, Oregon is converting half of its field goals, which is first among Pac-10 teams.

"A lot of our shots are short, inside shots — we don't really rely on the threes," junior guard Chelsea Wagner said. "We work

hard on our shooting. We have good shooters and we take good shots, and that's why we have a good shooting percentage."

Senior Cathrine Kraayeveld, who is coming off an 18-point effort against Long Island, is

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