

■ In my opinion



JON ROETMAN
ROUGHING THE PASSER

Moss' antics overshadow Hasselbeck's humbleness

While there were several upsets and spectacular plays during the wild-card round of the NFL playoffs last weekend, more attention was paid to Randy Moss and his posterior than anything else.

For those who haven't seen it, the controversial Minnesota wide receiver pretended to moon the Green Bay crowd after catching a game-clinching touchdown pass against the Packers.

While I personally find nothing wrong with what Moss did, plenty of people found the mock butt-cheek exposure appalling. The reaction caused by Moss' hilarious celebration took away from the Vikings' 31-17 defeat of the Packers and also overshadowed the weekend's other great accomplishments — the most unfortunate oversight being the birth of a leader in Seattle.

With "look-at-me" athletes like Moss bringing negative attention to their teams seemingly every week, Seahawk quarterback Matt Hasselbeck moved in a different direction Saturday after Seattle's season-ending loss to St. Louis.

The Seahawks' signal caller has every right to be a bitter man. He's had to endure impatient fans, underachieving receivers and being relegated to backup duty throughout his four seasons in Seattle. Regardless, he led the Seahawks to their second-consecutive playoff berth this season.

With the Seahawks playing in only the fourth home postseason game in franchise history, Seahawk receivers continued to drop passes against the Rams. Regardless, Hasselbeck managed to persevere, throwing for a team-playoff-record 341 yards and a pair of touchdowns.

Despite the team's struggles, the Seahawks had chance to win. With a little more than two minutes remaining in the fourth quarter, Seattle found itself down by seven and 64 yards away from the end zone. Hasselbeck drove his team down the field with precision passes and improvisational scrambling.

After 90 action-packed seconds, Seattle reached the Rams' 5-yard line and faced a fourth-and-four. With Seattle's season riding on one play, Hasselbeck rolled to his left, looked back to his right and fired a pass to the Seahawks' most sure-handed receiver, Bobby Engram. When the pass hit Engram's hands, Qwest Field erupted as 70,000 fans thought the Seahawks had managed to force overtime. As Engram hit the ground and rolled, however, the ball popped loose and Seattle's playoff run had come to an end on yet another drop.

When he realized the ball wasn't caught, Hasselbeck, who had fallen to his knees, pounded the turf and let out a thunderous grief-ridden scream. As he ran off the field, it appeared he was in near tears.

During post-game interviews, the emotionally-drained Hasselbeck had every reason to say terrible things about his teammates and Seattle fans. But after all the boos he had

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■ Men's basketball

Ducks more than ready for Huskies

With memories of Washington disrespect still lingering, Oregon prepares for game in Seattle

BY CLAYTON JONES
SPORTS EDITOR

In football, Washington danced on Oregon's "O" at the end of the game three years ago.

In basketball, Washington guard Nate Robinson dunked the basketball as time ran out on a game in which the Huskies had already secured a victory last season.

Oregon State may be the "official" rival of the Ducks, but Washington has become a very close second.

Duck forward Ian Crosswhite thinks that no one on his team should have a problem getting up for Oregon's Pacific-10 Conference matchup on Thursday against the Huskies at Bank of America Arena at Hec Edmundson Pavilion in Seattle.

"It's easy to get fired up for this one, because they have all their fans," Crosswhite said. "Their students are right behind you, and with all those people in there, it's easy to get that fire in your belly."

The Australian native said Husky students will be letting the Ducks know exactly where they are all game.

"You can hear everything they are saying," Crosswhite said. "You just have to block that out of your mind."

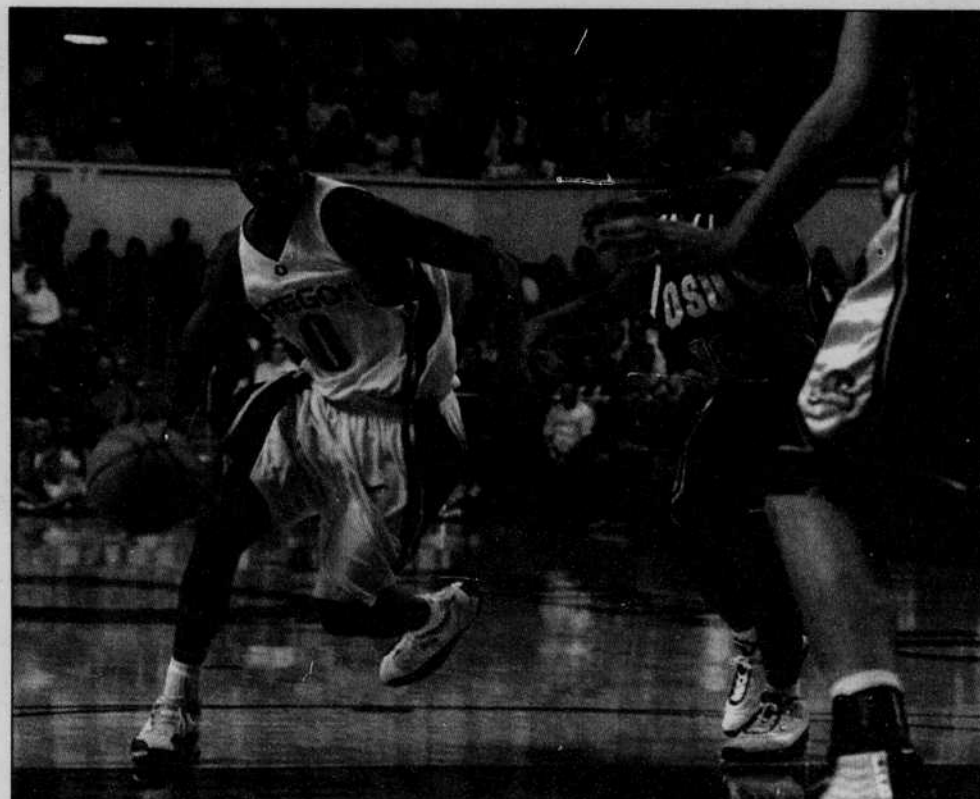
But Crosswhite said that is something the young Duck squad will face in every away game.

"Every Pac-10 school (is like that)," Crosswhite said. "Stanford's like that, and at Arizona State there's nobody in the crowd except the drunk baseball players."

Oregon point guard Aaron Brooks said that for as crazy as the Huskies' crowd gets, it's nothing compared to Mac Court.

"It's a step down from Mac Court," the Seattle native said. "But it's a nice atmosphere they got going up there. You know it's going to be rowdy."

The one thing that Oregon's leading scorer doesn't want is for the game to be focused on him — either for his hometown return or his matchup with Robinson.



LAUREN WIMER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Seattle native Aaron Brooks, seen here against Oregon State, will return home for the first time to face No. 14 Washington on Thursday.

"It's going to be a great game, and Nate's a good player," Brooks said. "We're trying to stay away from a one-on-one battle with me and Nate and focus on what we need to do as a team."

But for some of the freshmen, it will be their first Pac-10 encounter away from the comforts of McArthur Court, and their first meeting with the Huskies.

"It's going to be a new experience for me," Freshman Maarty Leunen said. "It's going to be a test to play a tough Washington team on the road."

Leunen said that not much has been mentioned about what happened at the end of last season's matchup in Seattle.

"They haven't told me too much," the

Redmond native said. "I know it was a heated battle and some stuff happened at the end."

Fellow freshman Bryce Taylor knows the game will be an intense one.

"We know it is extremely competitive, and they will be talking a lot of junk to us," Taylor said. "We got to play a tough style (of basketball) and not back down."

Crosswhite agrees that this will be a hard fought game.

"They play physical and want to show they have a lot of heart or whatever it is," Crosswhite said. "You've got to go down there and show that you have that same kind of heart."

claytonjones@dailyemerald.com

■ Women's basketball

Stanford's Candice Wiggins honored

The freshman standout led the Cardinal to two Pac-10 wins on the road

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

Even though Stanford has one of the most experienced teams in the Pacific-10 Conference, the Cardinal is receiving senior-like play from a freshman.

Stanford guard Candice Wiggins was named Pac-10 Player of the Week for Jan. 6-10.

The 17-year-old San Diego native averaged 29.5 points, 4.5 assists, 3.5 rebounds and 3.5 steals in the Cardinal's two road victories against Arizona State and Arizona.

Wiggins scored a career-high 31 points and handed out six assists in Stanford's 68-57 victory over No. 24 Arizona State. She led the team in both categories and added a career-high six steals.

In the 78-66 win over Arizona, Wiggins again scored a team-high 28 points and went 8 of 8 from the foul line. The win over the Wildcats snapped Arizona's



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Stanford freshman guard Candice Wiggins (11) leads the eighth-ranked Cardinal in scoring with 17.2 points per game.

NCAA-leading 34-game home winning streak.

Wiggins has led the Cardinal in scoring 10 times this season and is averaging 17.2 points and three steals per game.

"I can't really remember coaching anyone like her — being so young and yet being so mature and so old," Stanford head coach Tara VanDerveer said.

Oregon's Andrea Bills in a more familiar role

With the return of senior Cathrine Kraayeveld to the Duck lineup this season, Andrea Bills has been able to step out of the spotlight.

But while Bills is no longer the focus, her numbers are nearly identical to last season.

"With (Kraayeveld) in the lineup,

it frees her up from the biggest defensive responsibility (from the other team)," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said.

Bills is averaging 11.3 points per game, which is nearly identical to her 2003-04 average of 11.1 points per game. Her 6.8 rebounds per game is fifth-best in the Pac-10.

Surprising USC near top of Pac-10 Conference

Nearly a third of the way into the Pac-10 season, USC sports the second-best record in the conference, one of the biggest surprises thus far.

"We don't shoot the ball very well, we turn the ball over, so I don't really know (why we play well)," USC head coach Mark Trakh said. "(However) we rebound the ball well, and I think we play hard."

The USC (4-1 Pac-10) team does not feature a single top-20 scoring player in the conference, but through an even-distribution approach, the Women of Troy have the fourth-highest scoring team average (68.2) in the Pac-10.

briansmith@dailyemerald.com