

■ Men's basketball

## Taylor to make first visit home as a Duck

*The Encino, Calif., native is both eager and anxious about his homecoming against USC*

BY CLAYTON JONES  
SPORTS EDITOR

After a 25-game roller coaster ride this season, freshman Bryce Taylor finally gets to go home when the Oregon men's basketball team faces Southern California tonight in Los Angeles.

The Encino, Calif., native is third on the team in scoring at 11.2 points per game and admits that going back to Southern California will be a good experience for him.

"I'm real excited," the 6-foot-5 guard said. "You definitely want to go out there and play well."

Taylor attended Harvard-Westlake High School where he was a three-time CIF Division III Player of the Year. The 18-year-old averaged 25 points, seven rebounds and five assists per game, while hitting more than 50 percent of his three-point shots his senior season. He also owns school records for points in a season with 1,003 and points in a game with 54.

Taylor said coming home also gives him a chance to show that coming to Oregon wasn't a mistake.

"I want to prove to everybody that for me to be successful, I didn't have to stay home," he said. "People were saying a lot of things when I decided to come up here to Oregon."

But one aspect that might be tough when coming home, according to Taylor, will be keeping his wits about him and not getting too pumped up on the court.

"I just have to relax and approach it like any other game and not put too much pressure on myself to perform in front of friends and family," Taylor said. "That's all nice, but it's just another important game for us, and I can't let myself get too excited."

Taylor has seen his offensive production fluctuate throughout the season. He scored in double figures in six of his first seven games at Oregon, but only hit double digits in four of his next 12 games. Taylor seems to be escaping his recent slump, averaging 11.2 points per game in his last six contests.

While his offense hasn't been consistent, Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said there has been a steep improvement in his play on the defensive end of the floor.

"In high school, we didn't know if he could defend, because he never defended," Kent said. "Starting here in the fall, he was a long way away. But for him to do the job he did on (Chris) Hernandez the other night ... I thought that was a tremendous effort."

"He has come so far in terms of defending the basketball."

Taylor admits there was a lack of effort on the defensive end before coming to Oregon.

"Coming in I didn't play much defense in high school, because you can relax on the other end of the court and still get your 30 points," Taylor said. "Coming in on day one (at Oregon), that's one of the things I wanted to focus on. Now when Coach puts me on assignments against (Chris) Hernandez

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Oregon point guard Aaron Brooks dropped 34 points on USC when the two teams met at McArthur Court on Dec. 31.

■ Men's basketball

## Ducks must win to keep postseason hopes alive

*Oregon needs at least one victory in its last two games to gain a berth in the Pac-10 Tournament*

BY JON ROETMAN  
SENIOR SPORTS REPORTER

It's now or never for the Oregon men's basketball team.

After blowing numerous opportunities to clinch a berth in the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament, the Ducks need at least one win in their final two regular season games to earn a trip to Los Angeles.

Oregon (13-12 overall, 5-11 Pac-10) is tied for the eighth and final spot in the tournament with California (12-14, 5-11), but the Golden Bears hold the tiebreaker. Washington State (11-14, 6-10) is a game ahead in seventh place, with the Ducks owning the tiebreaker over the Cougars.

Oregon's first step toward earning its goal of a tournament berth is to defeat Southern California (12-16, 4-12) at 7:30 p.m. tonight at the Los Angeles Sports Arena. The Trojans are currently in last place in the Pac-10. Oregon prevailed in the first meeting between the two teams with a 90-83 win on Dec. 31 at McArthur Court.

The Ducks can clinch a tournament berth tonight with a win — and some help. Along with beating the Trojans, Oregon would need Washington to beat Cal and Stanford to beat Washington State.

The scenario would leave Oregon and Washington State tied with a 6-11 conference mark, while Cal would drop to 5-12. With the Cougars and Golden Bears playing each other on Saturday, and the Ducks holding the tiebreaker if all

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■ Women's basketball

## Oregon hopes to advance past first round

*After failing to win in the Pac-10 Tournament the past two years, the No. 2-seeded Ducks are ready*

BY STEPHEN MILLER  
SPORTS REPORTER

The Pacific-10 Conference Women's Tournament is still a fairly new event, appearing for the first time at McArthur Court upon the conclusion of the 2001-02 regular season. That year, Arizona State claimed the championship game; Stanford has won the last two.

Oregon reached the semifinals in the inaugural tournament but fell to the Sun Devils. Since then, the Ducks have not been able to make it past the first round, losing to UCLA in 2003 and California in 2004.

The Oregon teams that fell short in the tournament included memorable and skilled players, such as Shaquala Williams, Jamie Craighead and Kayla Steen. Also on those rosters from the start were center Andrea Bills and forward Cathrine Kraayeveld. Point guard Corrie Mizusawa transferred in the following season.

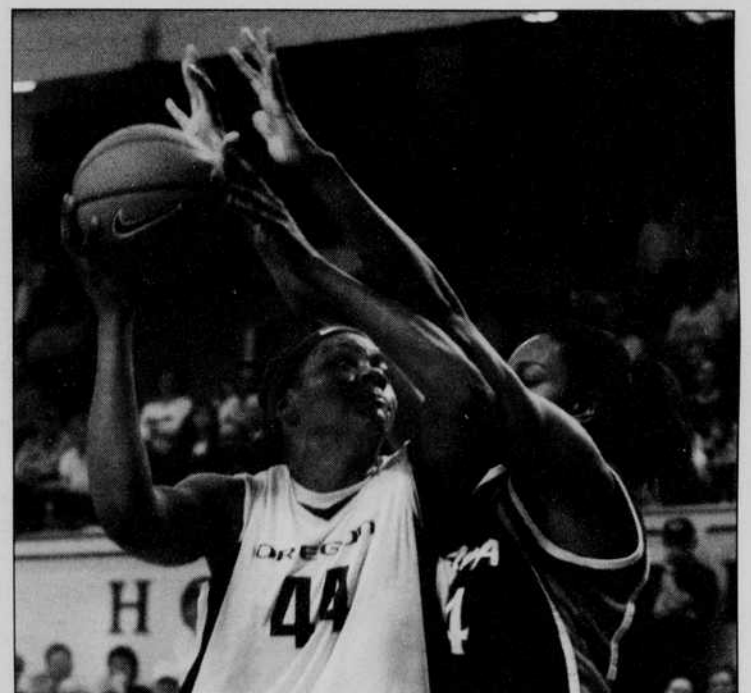
Bills, Kraayeveld and Mizusawa are now seniors, and there is no doubt they've gained experience and have observed what it takes to win at the tournament. With that said, and with all the knowledge in hand from three seasons of coming up short, the Ducks are ready to test what their seniors have learned.

"Hopefully we'll last a bit longer this time around," said Bills, who is second on the team in scoring with 11.4 points per game. "We're really looking forward to making it all the way to the championship game this year."

So, is this the best team Oregon has brought into the four-year-old Pac-10 Tournament?

"I think we're more determined," Bills said. "We have a good record this year and we're more complete as a team."

This season, Oregon posted a 12-6 Pac-10 record, its best since the



ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior center Andrea Bills, Oregon's second-leading scorer and rebounder this season, has played in the Pac-10 Tournament since its inception in 2002.

tournament was introduced. Even after a long regular season, the somewhat tired Ducks finished with a 19-8 overall record and earned the conference's No. 2 seed — their best previous spot was No. 5.

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