

*"It was a great play with Mitch Platt shooting a 40-footer, huh?"*

Oregon head coach Ernie Kent on the team's botched play in the closing seconds of regulation in the Ducks' overtime victory over USC

### ■ In my opinion



JON ROETMAN  
ROUGHING THE PASSER

## A veteran move by a rookie saves postseason

It appeared Oregon's postseason hopes had come to an end with 1.5 seconds remaining during Thursday's game against Southern California.

With the game tied at 77, Trojan guard Gabriel Pruitt drove to the basket and floated a running jump shot over Duck forward Maarty Leunen. Pruitt's shot fell through the net as he collided with Leunen.

The sparse USC crowd of 2,779 mustered a weak cheer, but was suddenly muffled by an official's whistle.

After a season of bad luck, missed opportunities and growing pains, Leunen saved the Ducks' postseason hopes by drawing a charge. The veteran move by the Oregon freshman allowed the game to go to overtime, where the Ducks won 94-87 at Los Angeles Sports Arena.

Oregon (14-12 overall, 6-11 Pacific-10 Conference) is now in sole possession of eighth place in the conference as California (12-15, 5-12) lost to Washington 106-73 on Thursday. Washington State (7-10) defeated Stanford 59-48, however, meaning the Ducks aren't guaranteed a berth in the Pac-10 Tournament just yet.

Oregon can assure itself a spot in the tournament by defeating UCLA on Saturday at Pauley Pavilion. If the Ducks lose to the Bruins, however, they can still qualify if the Cougars knock off the Golden Bears on Saturday at Haas Pavilion.

While having a shot at the Pac-10 Tournament — and ultimately the NCAA Tournament — will add excitement to the end of a season of disappointment for Oregon, the most encouraging aspect of Thursday's win was that the Ducks didn't quit.

Aaron Brooks, who has come under scrutiny for his recent turnover troubles, played his heart out for the full 45 minutes of Thursday's overtime battle, scoring 14 points and committing only two turnovers.

Bryce Taylor scored 23 points in 39 minutes in front of his hometown crowd.

Malik Hairston scored 19 points on 8 of 15 shooting.

The team improved to 71 percent from the foul line, knocking down 25 of 35 attempts, including 7 of its last 8 in overtime.

And most importantly, Oregon found a way to win a game it absolutely needed.

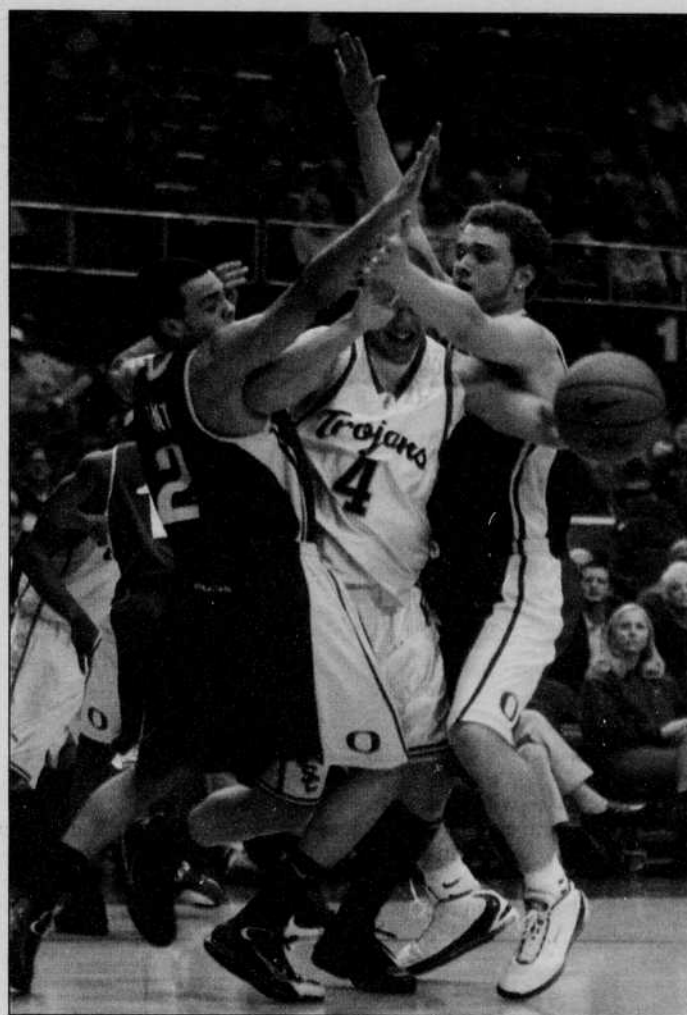
For the youthful Ducks, this win could spark a new level of confidence.

If so, Oregon will be a very dangerous team during its return trip to Los Angeles.

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### ■ Men's basketball

## Leunen lifts Oregon past USC, 94-87



NICHOLAS PELLICO | DAILY TROJAN

Oregon's Mitch Platt and Jordan Kent trap USC's Gregg Guenther in the Ducks' 94-87 overtime victory Thursday night at Los Angeles Sports Arena.

*The freshman draws an offensive foul to send the game into overtime, then hits a crucial three-pointer*

BY CLAYTON JONES  
SPORTS EDITOR

Maarty Leunen may have saved Oregon's postseason chances.

The freshman from Redmond took a charge to get the Ducks into overtime and hit a three-pointer in the extra period to give them the lead for good as the Ducks beat Southern California in overtime 94-87 at Los Angeles Sports Arena on Thursday night.

With 5.1 seconds left in regulation with the score tied at 77, USC's Gabriel Pruitt drove the length of the floor and made a runner with 1.5 seconds left, but Leunen stepped in front of him and planted his feet, and the official waved the basket and called an offensive foul, erupting a chorus of boos from the sparse 2,779 in attendance.

"I saw him the whole way and saw he wasn't going to pull up for the jumper, so I stepped in front of him," Leunen told 590 KUGN. "He hit me pretty hard, but it was worth it."

The game went into overtime and was tied at 84 when Leunen grabbed an offensive rebound after Ray Schafer missed a free throw. Oregon (14-12 overall,

6-11 Pacific-10 Conference) set the offense up again, and Leunen found himself wide open for a three-pointer and drained it to give Oregon an 87-84 lead over USC (11-17, 4-13).

"On that certain play the ball came to me and I was going to swing it to Aaron (Brooks), but I caught it in rhythm and was wide open," Leunen said. "Luckily I hit it."

Oregon hit 5 of 6 free throws down the stretch to seal the victory.

"We grew up through some adversity," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "We didn't get rattled at the end of regulation or in overtime and got a much-needed win."

Encino, Calif., native Bryce Taylor played his first game near home since coming to Oregon and led a quintet of Duck scorers in double figures with 23 points, including 9 of 13 from the free-throw line.

"It's hard to go home and do what he did," Kent said. "I was happy with the way he played."

Brooks logged all 45 minutes on the court and chipped in 14 points, five rebounds, four assists, a steal and a blocked shot.

MEN, page 8

### ■ Women's basketball

## Ducks vie for 20-win season at tourney

*Oregon hopes to accomplish the feat for the first time since 2001-02 when it takes on the winner of the Washington/Oregon State game*

BY BRIAN SMITH  
SPORTS REPORTER

For the first time in the brief history of the Pacific-10 Conference Women's Tournament, the Oregon women's basketball team is expected to win.

On Saturday, the second-seeded Ducks will take on the winner of the game between seventh-seeded Washington (13-15 overall, 9-9 Pac-10) and 10th-seeded Oregon State (6-22, 1-17) in the 2005 Pac-10 Women's Basketball Tournament at the HP Pavilion in San Jose, Calif.

With a win, Oregon (19-8, 12-6) will win 20 games in a season for the first time since 2001-02, the first year Bev Smith was head coach. During that year, the Ducks won 15 games in the regular season and added seven more in the postseason — which included a Women's National Invitation Tournament championship.

Also with a tournament win, the Ducks will secure themselves a spot in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in Smith's tenure.

But for now, the Ducks will have to wait on the winner of tonight's game to have a chance at advancing in the Pac-10 Tournament for only the second time in its four-year history.

"We're in really good shape for this week," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said. "We're coming off a very tough loss against Stanford. It was a psychological game for us. But we're healthy and we have Cathrine (Kraayeveld) back. So knock on wood, everyone is healthy."

Oregon's offensive certainly begins with Kraayeveld, the senior from Kirkland, Wash., who is the Ducks' leading scorer and rebounder. The 6-foot-4 forward is averaging 14.2 points and 8.5 rebounds per game.

Kraayeveld, who was just named to the All-Pac-10 Women's basketball team, is coming off an infection in her elbow, which has led to a string of sub-par performances of late. In the Ducks' 76-45 loss against Stanford, Kraayeveld was held scoreless for the first time in her career as a starter at Oregon.

However, she rebounded against California on Saturday, leading the Ducks with 14 points, four assists and three steals to secure the No. 2 seed.

"Our strength on offense is absolutely inside," Smith said. "And I know the last half of the Pac-10, teams did a good job trying to limit that, and that's what we are looking forward to in the postseason, to get the ball inside."



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon senior Brandi Davis is averaging 10.1 points and is 10th in the Pac-10 in three-point percentage this season.

Kraayeveld is joined by fellow post player and fellow All-Pac-10 player Andrea Bills. The senior received her first All-Pac-10 honor along with Kraayeveld on Thursday. Bills is

WOMEN, page 8