

*"The reason why I didn't stand for 'God Bless America' was because I didn't like the way they tied 'God Bless America' and 9/11 to the war in Iraq, in baseball."*

New York Mets' Carlos Delgado, who has changed his stance since last season when he wouldn't stand during the playing of 'God Bless America.'

■ In my opinion



LUKE ANDREWS  
EXCESSIVE CELEBRATION

## Demanding schedule will test Ducks' character

The Oregon men's basketball team, through four games of this young season, has outscored its opponents by a baffling 32.75-points-per-game average. While this figure may be a little skewed because of a 60-point thumping of Savannah State in the season opener, the Ducks still have yet to be threatened, and they've played decent opponents (see: Pacific, Rice).

Oregon's win margins this season — 60, 25, 22 and 24, respectively — still don't have many convinced that the Ducks are legit.

After all, the waves of promise last season only materialized into a disappointing 14-13 record, a ninth-place Pacific-10 Conference finish and a nonexistent postseason.

Thus, it appears, fans and media alike are entering this season with cautious enthusiasm, despite the return of an All-Pac-10 performer at point guard, two All-Pac-10 freshmen and a vastly improved inside game with the addition of junior college transfer Ivan Johnson. Most teams would be satisfied entering the season with a lineup like that.

So, I ask, where is the love for Oregon basketball?

The Pac-10 media tabbed the Ducks as the sixth best team in the conference, a position Oregon coach Ernie Kent credits to the fact that predictions were made before Johnson, a 6-foot-8 beast, officially joined the Ducks.

Sports Illustrated wised up a little, naming Oregon No. 41, or fifth-best in the conference behind Arizona (6), Stanford (14), UCLA (15) and Washington (20).

Then again, maybe less hype is exactly what this Oregon team needs.

Certainly, it wouldn't be easy to be tabbed as the "Team of the Century," a marketing slogan and burden placed upon last year's squad.

The expectations for a starting five that included two freshmen and two sophomores was admittedly a little unrealistic — especially when then-freshman guard Malik Hairston proclaimed that he wanted to "Carmelo-ize" the Ducks, a reference to Syracuse's run to the national championship with freshman phenom Carmelo Anthony in 2003.

A reality check may be the best thing that ever happened to Kent's bunch.

Now the Ducks can quietly enter their Pac-10 schedule improved, prepared and eager to erase the hangover of one bumpy ride through the Pac-10 schedule.

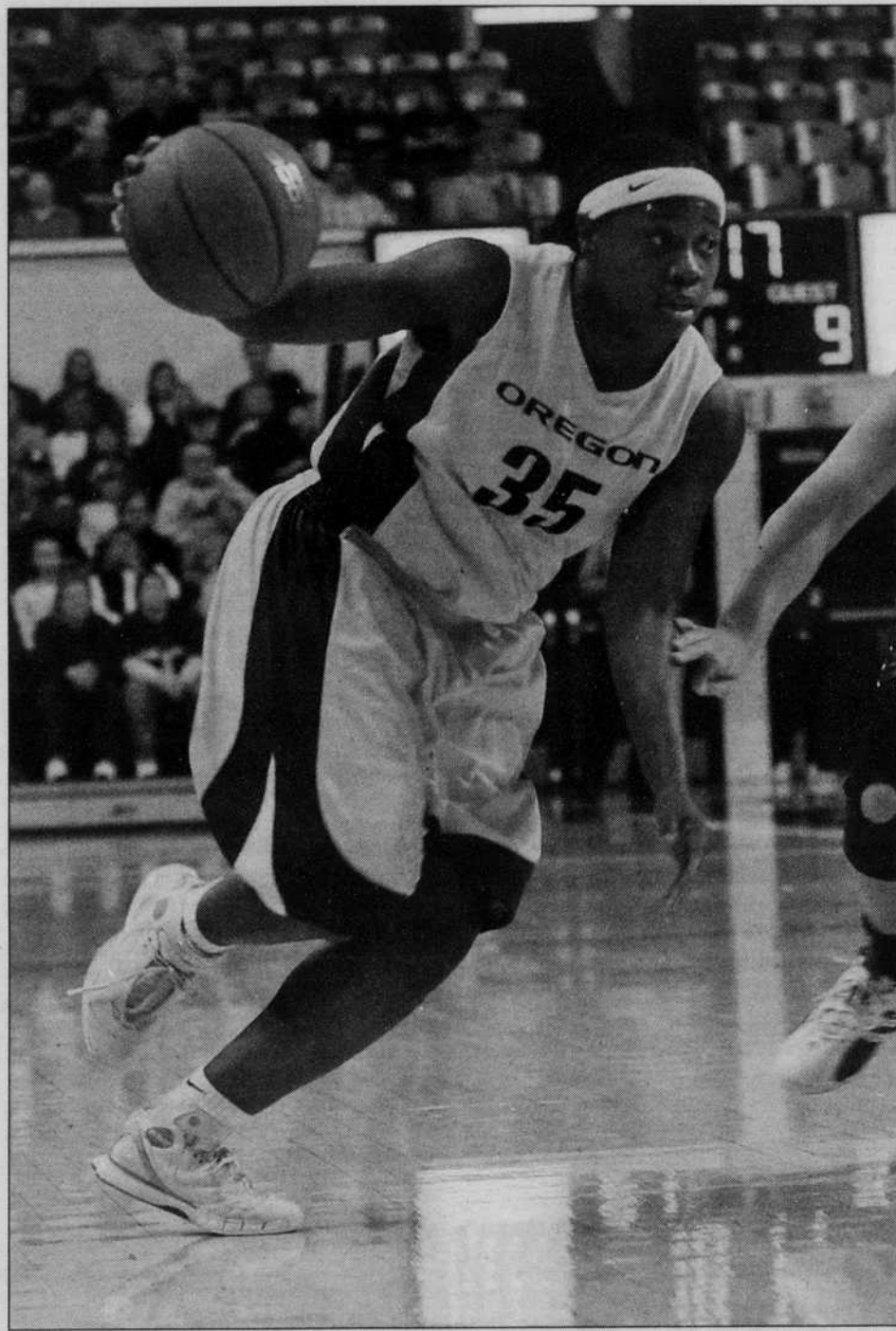
No doubt we'll get a better judgment of this Oregon team as one of its most difficult stretches awaits with a road trip to Vanderbilt (4-0) Wednesday, Georgetown (2-1) at McArthur Court on Saturday and then national runner-up Illinois (5-0) at the Rose Garden Dec. 10. While Bowie State and Savannah State provided nice warm-ups, this stretch will determine much for the Ducks: Are they for real or will hype quickly fade into oblivion once again?

I, for one, believe the former.

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■ Women's basketball recap

## Oaks shoots Oregon past Drake



ZANE RITT | PHOTOGRAPHER

Cicely Oaks drives to the basket Monday against Drake. Oaks scored a career-high 15 points and went 10 for 10 from the free-throw line.

*The Ducks' bench outscored its starters by 34 points and the entire Bulldog team by 12*

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS  
SPORTS REPORTER

It was hard not to notice Cicely Oaks on the floor or bench Monday night at McArthur Court. The junior from Portland highlighted her team and season-high 15 points with fist pumps and crossovers leading Oregon to a 70-40 win over Drake.

"It's always easy to have confidence when you're making shots," Oaks said. "When I make shots I get pumped, and I like to get my teammates into it so they can start hitting shots. I just like to have fun."

Oaks' swagger on the court delighted most of the 3,063 fans in attendance and is a sign of her new-found confidence developed this season. Prior to 2005, she saw limited action as an underclassman, but thanks to rigorous off-season workouts she has made herself into coach Bev Smith's most productive reserve.

"I'm very happy with Cicely," Smith said. "This young lady has a lot of credible basketball potential. She's a great athlete, she's very strong. Her success this year has been because that young lady committed to her fitness this summer and ran her butt off every day and got ready to play."

Most of Oaks' points came from the free-throw line where she was a flawless 10 for 10. She was not the only substitute on Smith's roster who left her mark on the game — the fifth-year head coach cleared her entire bench. Not one Duck saw less than 11 minutes of action or failed to score from the field. Oaks' teammate Brandi Davis also reached double figures going five for six from the field. Her 12 points helped Oregon's reserves outscore their starters 52-18. Davis ended a late spurt by the Bulldogs with a three-point play with just less than a minute left in regulation.

Kristen Forristall added eight points of her own for the Ducks despite playing only 14 minutes. Kedzie Gunderson and Gabrielle Richards both had five points and led Oregon with eight rebounds apiece.

Oregon's motion offense combined with Smith's constant player rotation made running

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■ Women's basketball notes

## Ducks happy with current level of play

*Three different players, Chelsea Wagner, Gabrielle Richards and Cicely Oaks, have led Oregon in scoring each of the last three games*

BY JEFFREY DRANSFELDT  
SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon women's basketball team sits at 5-1 with its lone loss coming against No. 21 Temple. The Ducks completed their November schedule with a 70-40 rout of Drake on Monday night at McArthur Court. "We are happy about how we are playing right now, but we are in the Pac-10, and we have some very stiff competition coming up," Oregon guard Cicely Oaks said. "We are not just going to be satisfied with beating these (non-conference) teams."

The Ducks now have 12 days to prepare for its December long road trip that starts Dec. 10 against Prairie View A&M at the Rose Garden in Portland.

The Ducks have played one game against a ranked opponent and do not face another ranked team until visiting No. 24 USC on Dec. 22, so the Ducks are hovering under the national radar. Counting the Others Receiving Votes category in the ESPN/USA Today poll,

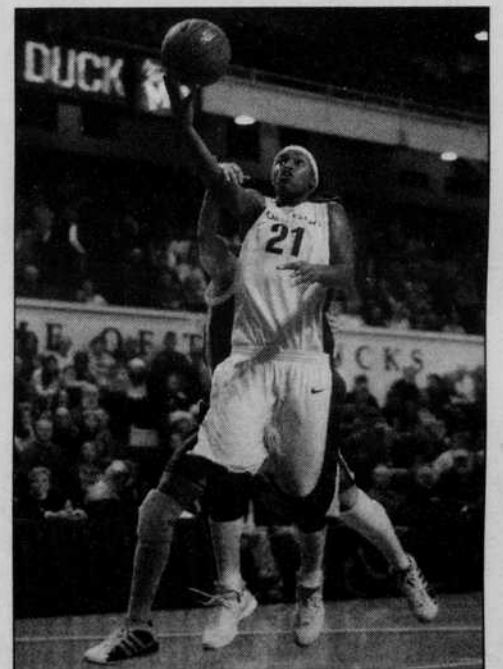
Oregon sits at No. 38. Oregon remains unranked in the Associated Press Poll.

"If they are not in the Top 25, they probably should be," Drake coach Amy Stephens said. "Losing to Temple at home probably hurt them. They had a great opportunity to pull an upset over a ranked team."

### Return to the inside game

Gabrielle Richards reasserted herself with 18 points and nine rebounds against Arkansas after the perimeter-oriented Chelsea Wagner led Oregon in scoring against Nevada and Portland. Richards combined for 10 points in those two games before her performance last Friday that was reminiscent of her 19 and 20-point games, respectively, against St. Francis (Pa.) and Temple to start the season.

Oregon utilized the perimeter players Monday with Oaks and Brandi Davis leading the Ducks with 15 and 12 points, respectively. Senior Davis is averaging 15.7 minutes a game



ZANE RITT | PHOTOGRAPHER

Brandi Davis is fouled as she drives for a layup. Davis made the shot and free throw to add to her 12 points.

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