

Sports

PAC-12 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Beavers get 2nd win over Ducks

By Nick Daschel
The Oregonian

If ever there was a game putting Oregon State's 2020-21 season into a nutshell, it was Thursday's 71-64 win over Oregon in the Pac-12 tournament quarterfinals in Las Vegas.

To quickly recap this season: bad start, no hope, then a little life, momentum, catch fire and now one of the country's hottest teams.

To recap Thursday: bad start, lucky to be in the game, a second-quarter spark, catch fire in the third, second win in five days over rival Oregon.

The numbers speak loudly. During the course of Thursday's game, Oregon State had its worst scoring quarter of the season, a five-point first quarter. The Beavers had their best scoring quarter of the season, a 31-point third.

"It's the season of 'Twilight Zone,'" OSU coach Scott Rueck said.

Descriptive phrases similar to that have been assigned to Oregon State's pandemic-impacted season. Strange. Weird.

And now ... rewarding. How else to describe a season that had a dozen game cancellations, a four-week pause due to a COVID-19 outbreak and a five-game losing streak, only to find Oregon State in the Pac-12 tournament semifinals for the first time since 2017?

"Did we see ourselves in the Pac-12 semifinal a month ago? The obvious answer would have been no," Rueck said. "It was hard to envision what the potential of this team could be, because we hadn't had a chance to experience it."

Oh, the Beavers dreamed. Dreamed big, even after Oregon stomped the Beavers 79-59 on Dec. 13 in Corvallis. Just like getting to the Pac-12 semifinals, who could have guessed OSU beating Oregon twice within five days later in the season?



Bryan Steffy/Pac-12 Pool

Oregon's Erin Boley shoots against Oregon State's Taylor Jones (44) and Taya Corosdale during the Pac-12 women's basketball tournament Thursday, March 4.

"This is a team full of very competitive people and that's the reason we're here."

— Scott Rueck, Oregon State women's basketball coach

"We just had to play some games, get in a rhythm," said senior guard Aleah Goodman, who had 13 points, one of four Beavers to score in double figures against Oregon. "When that first game happened, was I worried? Not really, just because it was our third game of the season in the Pac-12. I knew what this team and this group was capable of."

Fast forward to Thursday, when nothing went right at the offensive end for Oregon State. The Beavers were pitiful during the first quarter, scoring a season-low five points, making 2 of 16 shots.

Rueck was blunt about OSU's first-quarter offense. Execution was poor, and the Ducks' defense made it worse. Rueck said he told the team it felt like they were down 20 points after the first quarter.

In reality, it was only 10-5.

While Rueck felt like Oregon had the Beavers playing "on our heels," OSU played well enough on defense, and better yet, limited the Ducks to one shot per possession by hitting the defensive boards.

"Defensive rebounds was the only reason we were in the game," Rueck said.

But the Beavers have been lights out at the offensive end of late, and a repeat of the first quarter seemed unlikely. A 3-pointer by Goodman with 7:45 left in the second quarter was "a shot in the arm for the team," Rueck said.

The Beavers scored 19 points in the second quarter, but as it turned out, they were just getting warmed up.

"We found our rhythm and remembered who we were and played good basketball on both ends of the floor in that second quarter," Rueck said.

The third quarter was an offensive clinic, by both teams for several minutes. The Ducks made 7 of their first 9 shots in the third, but it didn't last. Oregon State was a tour de force for the entire 10 min-

utes, hitting 12 of 15 shots and scoring 31 points.

Rueck said it felt similar to Sunday's performance in Eugene, when OSU rolled up 88 points against the Ducks.

"I don't know if we've been better for a stretch than that," he said.

The third-quarter production was widespread. It was pick-and-rolls to Taylor Jones, who had eight points in the quarter.

Taya Corosdale hit a pair of 3s and had eight points. Talia von Oelhoffen had eight points, including a memorable three-point play where she got emotional in the face of Duck defender Jaz Shelley after the layup.

Rueck loved it, though he didn't think von Oelhoffen talked trash.

"I can relate. The first time I was in (the rivalry) I had some of those same emotions," he said. "Seeing her pump her fist, and get fired up, who doesn't love that? This is a team full of very competitive people and that's the reason we're here. That's the reason we were able to weather."

BAKER VOLLEYBALL

Bulldogs fall to Badgers, Bobcats

NORTH POWDER — The Baker High School volleyball team's season record dropped to 0-3 after the Bulldogs dropped a pair of matches to Powder Valley and Union on Thursday evening, March 4.

Both matches were played at North Powder. In the first match, Baker lost in straight sets to Powder Valley, 25-20, 25-11 and 25-20.

Against Union, Baker won the opening set, 25-21, but the Bobcats won the next three to take the match. The scores were 25-16, 25-15 and 25-8.

Individual statistics weren't available in time for this story.

Baker returned to action this afternoon with a 1 p.m. PDT match at Ontario.

OREGON MEN'S BASKETBALL

Ducks top UCLA, take over first place in Pac-12

EUGENE (AP) — Chris Duarte scored 23 points, LJ Figueroa added 18 on 8-of-11 shooting, and Oregon rallied to beat UCLA 82-74 on Wednesday night, March 3 in a matchup between two of the top teams in Pac-12.

Eugene Omoruyi and Will Richardson scored 15 points apiece for Oregon (18-5, 13-4).

The Ducks, who moved a half-game ahead of UCLA and Southern California in the Pac-12 standings, play at Oregon State in the regular-season finale Sunday with a chance to clinch the conference title. The Beavers beat a short-handed Oregon 75-64 on Jan. 23. Duarte, Richardson and Figueroa missed the game for various reasons.

Junior Jules Bernard had a career-high 23 points for UCLA, but was scoreless over the final 13 minutes as the Ducks erased a nine-point deficit.

Jaime Jaquez Jr., who finished with 15 points for the Bruins, hit a jumper to make it 60-51 with 11:16 to play but the Bruins went 1 for 6 from the field and committed six turnovers as Oregon scored 15 of the next 17 points. Cody Riley converted a three-point play to make it 68-all with four minutes left but Figueroa and Omoruyi each made a layup before Duarte hit a 3 late in the shot clock to put the Ducks in front for good.

Oregon shot a season-high 60.8% (31 of 51) from the field, hit 8 of 17 from 3-point range, and outscored the Bruins 12-6 from the free-throw line.

The Bruins (17-7, 13-5) have lost back-to-back games for just the second time this season, squandering control of their own destiny in the Pac-12. They play USC in the regular-season finale today.

Lillard's late surge leads Blazers past Kings, 123-119

By Anne M. Peterson
AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — Damian Lillard had 44 points, including 10 straight at a key moment down the stretch, to give the Portland Trail Blazers a 123-119 victory over the Sacramento Kings on Thursday night, March 4.

Enes Kanter added 22 points and 21 rebounds for the Blazers, who have won three straight and are 21-14 heading into the All-Star break. It's the Blazers' best start through 35 games since 2015.

Lillard said the difference in the first half was that the team never got down after CJ McCollum and Jusuf Nurkic were injured.

"When CJ and Nurk went down, we just said 'Let's not feel sorry for ourselves. Let's show up and let's get the job done. Let's come together, let's lean on each other, count on each other and find a way to get it done.' And we did that," Lillard said.

De'Aaron Fox had 32 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds for Sacramento, which had six players score in double figures.

Richaun Holmes dunked to give the Kings a 103-98 lead with 5:41 left, but Lillard answered with a 3-pointer and Kanter's layup tied it at 103.

Sacramento went up 108-103 with 3:49 to go on Harrison Barnes' layup and Buddy Hield's 3. Lillard responded with a pullup jumper, a layup and a pair of 3-pointers in quick succession to put the Blazers ahead 115-108 with just more than a minute left.

Sacramento wasn't quite done, pulling within 119-118 on a 3-pointer with 6.6 seconds left. After Gary



Tribune News Service

Portland's Damian Lillard drives past Golden State's James Wiseman on Wednesday, March 3. Lillard led the Blazers to wins over the Warriors and over Sacramento on Thursday.

Trent Jr. made two free throws for the Blazers, Fox hit one then appeared to miss the second intentionally. After a review over whether the ball hit the rim, Portland got the ball back with 3.7 seconds left and Lillard was fouled to close it out.

Lillard finished with eight 3-pointers.

"On the whole it was a really really difficult game to play because of their style of play, they push the ball, they get to the paint," Blazers coach Terry Stotts said. "We had trouble rebounding the ball. In some ways, it was a little bit like our previous game where we just kind of hung around, made some plays at the end."

Both teams were also playing the second of a back-to-back heading into the All-Star break.

The Kings had won two of their last three games after a nine-game losing streak. Sacramento was still

without reigning NBA rookie of the month Tyrese Haliburton, who missed his fourth game with a calf injury.

"We don't want to take any moral victories. We wanted to win tonight and we didn't," said Harrison Barnes, who finished with 17 points. "Some calls didn't go our way, some shots didn't go our way."

Nemanja Bjelica's 3-pointer gave the Kings an early 21-16 lead. Lillard's 3 late in the opening quarter put Portland up 28-27, and the All-Star had 15 points by the end of the period.

"Dame's a great player. He had it going there," Barnes said. "We tried to throw a bunch of different coverages at him but we couldn't touch him with the way the whistle was going tonight. Dame is gonna score but you've got to limit the rest of the team."

Lillard's 3-pointer lifts Blazers over Warriors

PORTLAND (AP) — Played tough by the Warriors all game, Damian Lillard needed to make something happen.

And that's exactly what he did.

Lillard hit a deep 3-pointer with 13.7 seconds left to give the Portland Trail Blazers a hard-fought 108-106 victory over Golden State on Wednesday night.

"Now is the time where I've got to force it, I've got to create the opportunity, even if it's a tough one," Lillard said about his thinking as the clock ticked down. "Whatever happens I've got to put my foot on the gas a little bit more, and try to make something happen."

Lillard and Carmelo Anthony each had 22 points for the Blazers, who kept it close most of the way after the Warriors jumped out to an early lead.

Stephen Curry led the Warriors with 35 points. His 3-pointer gave Golden State a 101-96 lead with 3:57 remaining.

Lillard, stifled by the Warriors through the first three quarters, made a 3 that tied it 103-all before Draymond Green's 3 put Golden State in front with 1:43 to go.

Lillard made free throws to get Portland within a point, then hit a 29-footer to give the Blazers a 108-106 lead with 13.7 seconds left. He took a charge from Green, which prompted an unsuccessful challenge by Golden State, and Portland won its second straight after a four-game losing streak.

"He hit a huge shot, a deep shot," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "That's what he does. That's the kind of player he is. Even on a bad night he can get going at any time, so that's why you have to stay alert the entire 48 (minutes)."

All eyes were on the matchup between Lillard and Curry, who are among the NBA's top scorers. Lillard went into the game ranked third in the league with 29.6 points per game, just ahead of Curry at 29.5. Washington guard Bradley Beal tops the list with 32.9.

— Anne M. Peterson, AP Sports Writer

HELP ON THE WAY

The Trail Blazers announced that McCollum, who has been out with a left foot fracture, has been cleared for contact practice. McCollum has been out since Jan. 16 when he injured his foot in a game against Atlanta.

McCollum, who was averaging 26.7 points before he was hurt, will be key to Portland's playoff push.

The Blazers also said Nurkic continues to rehab his right wrist fracture and will be evaluated next week.