

Sports

NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

USC eliminates Ducks in Sweet 16

By Tim Booth
AP Sports Writer

Dana Altman was quick to shoulder the blame. One of Oregon's ugliest offensive performances of the season came at the wrong time and against an opponent the Ducks knew all too well.

For the second time this season, the Ducks lacked the answers to solve Southern California.

"First thing after the game I told the team, 'When you lose, you lose together. I made a mistake on personnel and I didn't have you ready for the zone,'" Altman said. "And you want your guys to look in the mirror and say when they don't get something done.

"And as a coach, if you don't set that example, it's pretty hard for them to do it."

Oregon's season came to a crashing halt with an 82-68 loss to USC in the West Region semifinal Sunday night. The Ducks were undone by struggles at the offensive end as they were unable to solve the length and size presented by the Trojans' zone defense.

Since losing to USC in late February, the Ducks (21-7) had been rolling. Oregon had won seven of the previ-



John McCoy/Getty Images-TNS

The USC Trojans, shown here against the Oregon Ducks in a Feb. 22 game, won the rematch in the Sweet 16 round of the NCAA tournament on Sunday, March 28.

ous eight games, the only loss coming to state rival Oregon State in the Pac-12 Tournament. During that eight-game stretch, the Ducks were averaging nearly 80 points per game and had just dropped a season-high 95 points on No. 2 seed Iowa in the round of 32.

But that offensive punch was absent against the Trojans. Oregon's lowest offensive output of the season came in its 72-58 loss to USC on Feb. 22. And for much of the night, it appeared the

Ducks might be on the verge of some more ugly offensive numbers.

"Their length really bothered us and got us off track," said Oregon forward Eugene Omoruyi, who finished with a game-high 28 points. "And we just didn't compete in the first half, which we should have come out more aggressive. But yeah, their length really affected us in our offense."

Omoruyi and Chris Duarte carried the Ducks' offense. Duarte added 21 points and the top two scorers all season

for the Ducks combined for 17 of Oregon's 26 made shots.

What the Ducks lacked was the supporting cast, which had been so important to their success during the season. Oregon's other three starters — LJ Figueroa, Will Richardson and Eric Williams Jr. — were a combined 5 of 27 shooting and had 11 total points. Figueroa and Richardson had a combined 40 points by themselves in the victory over Iowa.

"Eric took some tough shots that first half. LJ just never seemed to get comfortable. Will had been scoring well," Altman said. "The zone didn't allow us to move the ball. Some of the shots early off the dribble I thought took some guys out of their rhythm."

Despite the offensive issues, the Ducks had a chance late to put pressure on the Trojans. After trailing by 21 midway through the second half, the Ducks pulled within 69-60 with 3:52 left. But Tahj Eaddy answered with a 3-pointer for USC and ended Oregon's comeback bid.

"We were going to compete to the end no matter what," Omoruyi said.

NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Louisville ends Oregon's season

By Doug Feinberg
AP Basketball Writer

SAN ANTONIO — Dana Evans broke out of a shooting slump in a big way, carrying Louisville to the Elite Eight.

The senior All-America guard matched her career high with 29 points and the No. 2 seed Cardinals advanced to the regional final of the women's NCAA Tournament for the third straight time with a 60-42 win over sixth-seeded Oregon on Sunday, March 28.

"I knew it would end at the right time, when I needed it to," Evans said. "My teammates didn't need me to do what I did tonight in the other games. Everybody has been stepping up. I think everything happens for a reason. My teammates were able to get their confidence and get going and now that I feel like that I'm back to my normal self, I feel like we're going to be just fine."

Evans had struggled late in the season and hadn't played well in the first two games of the tournament. She hadn't scored more than 15 points in any of the five ACC or NCAA Tournament games before Sunday.

She said former Louisville great Asia Durr had reached out to her over the last few days.

"She sent me a nice text just telling me to just relax, let the game come to me and don't overthink it," Evans said. "I took her words, and it worked."

The Cardinals will face top seed Stanford on Tuesday night in the Alamo Region final.

Louisville (26-3) continued its stellar defensive play, holding Oregon (15-9) to 14 points in the first half, including six in the second quarter.

Evans provided the offense. After going scoreless in the first quarter, she started to heat up. Oregon had freshman Maddie Scherr guarding Evans in the opening period before she hurt her ankle and had to come out of the game. Evans responded by scoring 13 points in the second and ended the period with a nifty drive and dish right before the buzzer to give Louisville a 29-14 advantage at the break.

Oregon rallied in the second half, cutting its deficit to 10 after three quarters. The Ducks were down 41-33 with 50 seconds left in the third after two free throws by Nyara Sabally. But she went down with a left ankle injury 20 seconds later when she stepped on a teammate's foot. Sabally had to be helped off the court. She didn't return and finished with a team-leading 14 points.

The Ducks got within 43-37 early in the fourth quarter, but seven straight points by Evans — including two deep 3-pointers — started a 13-0 run that put the game away.

Gonzaga routs Creighton to stay unbeaten

By Michael Marot
AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — Gonzaga guard Andrew Nembhard believes he still has room to improve.

The scary part is, he thinks that also might be true for the undefeated Bulldogs.

Nembhard had 17 points and eight assists, both season highs, to keep the NCAA Tournament's top overall seed rolling Sunday, March 28, with a 83-65 rout of fifth-seeded Creighton in the West Region semifinals. Afterward, he insisted nobody was satisfied.

"I don't think we have peaked," he said. "I think, as I said earlier, we can always get better. We can always work on our stuff. So I think we're getting close, and we need to squeeze out that five percent that we talked about."

It's hard to imagine the Bulldogs (29-0) could play much better.

They extended their school-record winning streak to 33, the Division I record for consecutive double-digit wins to 26 and reached the Elite Eight for the fourth time in six years. Next up is Tuesday's West regional final

against sixth-seeded Southern California, an 82-68 winner over seventh-seeded Oregon.

Some of Gonzaga's usual stars were content with supporting roles Sunday.

Second-team All-American Drew Timme led the way with 22 points, six rebounds and four assists as the Zags shot 59.6% from the field against a foe that led the Big East in defensive field goal percentage. Joel Ayayi added 13 points and eight rebounds.

First-team All-American Corey Kispert scored 12 points and Timme's fellow second-teamer Jalen Suggs

finished with nine.

Defensively, the Zags held Creighton to 40 points over the final 30 minutes as they methodically turned a 27-25 game into a blowout. Gonzaga never trailed, led 43-33 at halftime and spent most of the second half pulling away.

Blazers top Raptors, 122-117

By Dick Scanlon
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Damian Lillard helped Portland surge ahead in the third quarter. CJ McCollum finished the job in the closing minutes.

McCollum scored seven of his 23 points in the final two minutes and the Trail Blazers beat the Toronto Raptors 122-117 on Sunday night, March 28.

Lillard had 22 points and 11 assists for the Blazers, who took command of their third straight win — all on the road — by holding Toronto to 10 points in the third quarter.

"I thought we did a good job on their two guys most of the night, but we couldn't get by that dry quarter," Raptors coach Nick Nurse said. "The biggest thing was the turnovers. We couldn't quite handle the physicality."

Pascal Siakam finished with 26 points and eight rebounds, and Fred VanVleet added 20 points and eight assists for Toronto, which lost for the 11th time in 12 games. The Raptors shot 4 for 22 with five turnovers in the third quarter.

The game was played three days after the trade deadline move in which the Raptors sent Norman Powell to the Blazers for Gary Trent Jr. and Rodney Hood.

Lillard, who sat out Friday night's win at

Orlando with a left knee contusion, joined Powell in Portland's three-guard starting lineup, which didn't get a long look.

"Norman got two quick fouls and we only played about four minutes in that stretch with that group," Portland coach Terry Stotts said. "But we'll play that lineup. It's just a matter of when and where and what the matchups are."

Derrick Jones Jr., bumped from the lineup, scored Portland's final seven points of the first half, but Hood's 3-pointer at the buzzer gave Toronto a 74-68 halftime edge.

Jones finished with 16 points and three rebounds in 21 minutes.

"He really had an impact on the game in the second half," Stotts said.

The Raptors led 82-75 when Siakam scored on a short jumper with 6:27 left in the third quarter. But Toronto was held scoreless for nearly six minutes.

"We felt like a really good defense in that third quarter. We were out there communicating and working things out. It was good to have (Powell) out there," said Lillard. "Typically, we do well with three-guard lineups, and he's a physical guard."

A steal and a dunk by Powell put the Blazers ahead 83-82, and Lillard scored seven points in a 16-2 run that closed the third quarter with Portland leading 91-84.

Peace of Mind

Tires LES SCHWAB

Our Best Tire Value PROMISE

Free Services with tires purchased at Low Bros. Tire

Custom Wheels, Lifts & Leveling Kits

FREE Rotations

FREE Rebalance

FREE Flats

Low Brothers Tire Service

541-523-3679

210 Bridge St. Baker City, OR

We're now offering home remodels through the winter months as we're fully licensed and bonded.

541-519-5268

STONE ELITE

LANDSCAPING & IRRIGATION

stone.elitesprinklernland@gmail.com CCB#231936 LCB# 9809