

WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL | OREGON STATE

Beavers' tournament hopes beginning to dim

BY NICK DASCHEL

The Oregonian
CORVALLIS — Oregon State is running out of chances to extend its NCAA women's basketball tournament streak to eight years.

The Beavers had an excellent opportunity to make a case Friday night, but too many offensive dry spells couldn't offset some brilliant play in a 74-66 loss to No. 24 Oregon.

Oregon State fell to 11-9 overall, a record that just by itself doesn't scream NCAA tourney team. But Beavers coach Scott Rueck makes a good point when he says, look at who we've been playing.

Each of the nine opponents Oregon State has played in the mix for an NCAA tournament bid. Even Villanova isn't that far out of it, and the Wildcats just won at UConn. The Beavers lost their fourth consecutive game, all to teams solidly in the tournament field in Arizona, Arizona State, Stanford and Oregon.

But at some point, if the Beavers want to join March Madness, they've got to beat some of these teams. OSU's only win over a potential NCAA tournament team is Colorado.

Oregon State needs more, and Friday might have been the start of something magical. The Beavers had a near-triple double from Talia von Oelhoffen — 12 points, 12 rebounds, nine assists — and had a breathtaking 18-3 spurt late in the third quarter to erase a 14-point deficit.

But each quarter, the Beavers had a killer scoreless drought. To wit: First quarter: Oregon blanks OSU for more than five minutes, while running off 14 consecutive points.

Second: The Beavers don't score during the final 4:37 of the quarter. The Ducks turn a three-point deficit into a five-



Sean Meagher/The Oregonian

Oregon State guard Talia von Oelhoffen sets up the offense against Oregon Friday night at Gill Coliseum in Corvallis.

point halftime lead.

Third: OSU's offense goes silent for nearly four minutes, while the Ducks increase a four-point lead to 14.

Fourth: During a four-minute stretch, Oregon outscores the Beavers 14-2.

Given that, it's probably a miracle Oregon State lost by only eight. But the Beavers proved they have enough talent to put it together for stretches. Just not games.

Against NCAA tournament-type teams like Oregon, it's not enough.

"That's kind of been our hurdle this year. Amazing spurts and great stretches, and then consistency has been our nemesis, at both ends of the floor. We lose focus, make mistakes and let teams get

away from us," Rueck said.

Turnovers are constantly an issue. The Beavers had 15, to Oregon's six. That allowed the Ducks to take 16 more shots, and get more free throw opportunities. It was the fourth consecutive game where OSU had at least nine more turnovers than the opponent.

Rueck thought for good stretches, the Beavers moved the ball well, resulting in high-quality shots.

"But if one out of every four (possessions) is a turnover, that makes it tough to overcome," Rueck said. "One of the challenges for this team is we have a lot of inexperience on the perimeter. When you have a veteran group, it's easy. They've seen it a billion times." Von Oelhoffen is one of

those brilliant, but inexperienced perimeter players. On a night where she nearly had the school's first triple double in five years, von Oelhoffen also struggled at times. She didn't take a shot during the first half.

Then in the fourth quarter, with Oregon racing out to a 69-58 lead, von Oelhoffen sat on the bench for three minutes after making some defensive mistakes.

Oregon State's best stretch came late in the third quarter. Trailing 48-34 with 3:15 remaining, the Beavers scored 18 of the game's next 21 points to take a 52-51 lead by quarter's end. Everything seemed to click: defense, transition, shooting.

About a minute before the burst, Rueck was hit with a technical foul after what he thought was non-call and a dangerous play. After getting little satisfaction from the official, Rueck walked away, turned to the Gill Coliseum crowd and began motioning his arms, asking for noise.

Rueck insists he wasn't trying to fire up his team.

"I wasn't happy with what I thought was a dangerous play. It's my job. I'm hired to coach and protect this team," Rueck said. "I was happy to see our team fight and give themselves a chance tonight."

More opportunities to produce an NCAA tournament resume are ahead, starting Sunday at Oregon. It's the fourth of five consecutive games against opponents ranked among the top 10 in NCAA NET rankings, a key tournament metric. Oregon is No. 7.

"It's been a hard stretch for everyone, including our staff. This kind of thing really stretches you, as a human," Rueck said. "Your option is the look at it and have fun with it. So we've been doing that."



Marcio Jose Sanchez/AP

Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow (9) stretches during a walk-through in practice Saturday in Los Angeles.

Super Bowl

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Bringing in veteran Matthew Stafford in exchange for a hefty amount of draft picks — as well as a younger quarterback, Jared Goff, who was part of the LA team that lost in the 2019 Super Bowl, when he struggled mightily — has paid off richly for the Rams.

Stafford's 49,995 yards passing and 323 TD passes are the most for a QB making his first Super Bowl appearance. Stafford needs 209 yards passing to become the sixth player to reach 6,000 in a single season.

But he also puts the ball up for grabs at times. That needs to be limited on Sunday.

"We went out and got him because we thought it was a chance to be able to get a great player of his magnitude," Rams coach Sean McVay said of Stafford, who spent a dozen seasons playing well without winning in Detroit. "What he's done, he's elevated everybody around him. He's made me a better coach. He's made his teammates better."

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— Sean McVay, Los Angeles Rams coach

which allowed Burrow to be the most-sacked passer in the league, 51 times, nine more in a playoff victory at Tennessee — bowing up against a generational talent such as Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald, and other top pass rushers Von Miller and Leonard Floyd.

"This is a special group of talented guys on this defense," said Miller, who won the 2015 NFL championship in Denver, when he was Super Bowl MVP. "I'm talking about one of the best groups I've ever been fortunate enough to be a part of. We work together as a team, and it just gets better each week."

It's about Ramsey being a shut-down cover guy against Offensive Rookie of the Year Ja'Marr Chase, and the rest of the Los Angeles secondary handling Chase's compatriots, Tee Higgins and Tyler Boyd. And about the same on the other side, with Apple and fellow defensive backs trying to slow down

Offensive Player of the Year Cooper Kupp, Odell Beckham Jr. and Van Jefferson. It's about the kicking games, which have been very solid in the postseason, continuing to perform on the sport's biggest stage.

Same for the coaches: McVay, who is accustomed to the glaring spotlight after taking the Rams to the playoffs in four of his five seasons, and Taylor, his former assistant, in his first postseason as a head man. McVay did not perform well, nor did his team, in that Super Bowl three years ago, looking uncomfortable against Tom Brady and the Patriots.

As difficult as it may be — and it is very difficult — it's about treating the Super Bowl in the cliched phrasing players use: just another game. There's plenty of truth to that.

"You got a job to go out there and execute and try to lead your team," Stafford said. "The game begins, and it's football. That's what we're here for."

Gymnastics

Continued from B1

For Dagen, the high score on bars was especially rewarding. She has incorporated a new single-bar release into her program, known as the Tkatchev skill.

"Last year when I was in the bar lineup, I didn't have a single-bar release, so I couldn't have a 10.0 start value and so it was already hard for me to get a good score without that," Dagen said. "Bars have always been my frustrating event, I think because it is so different from the rest of the events."

There are common elements on the vault, the beam and the floor and Dagen was able to master those skills through sheer force and determination. The rhythm of the bars, however, is different. Dagen has had to learn how to work with the bars instead of trying to power through it as

she does in her other routines.

"I have to let the bars swing me," Dagen said. "I've been working on it for many, many years, just having the confidence back on that event. So nailing it and getting a rewarding score was the highlight of my day."

Dagen is thankful to have the new practice facility to work on these skills. Oregon State debuted the 20,000-square-foot facility in April.

"Having this new area ... it just makes it easier to learn bigger skills and be safer on the body, too, with softer landings," Dagen said.

The No. 13 Beavers (5-1) will be home on Sunday, hosting No. 34 Washington at noon at Gill Coliseum. Oregon State has two home meets and three road meets left on the schedule before the Pac-12 Championships, which will be held March 19.

As a senior, Dagen is used to the collegiate calendar, but it is a new experience for Carey.

"It's definitely different than what I'm used to. I'm used to competing once a month. It's definitely different that way, but I am having so much fun. It's so much fun just going out there and competing every week with my team and knowing they have my back no matter what. I just want to do so well for them," Carey said. "I'm not used to having a team. It was different for me at first. I wasn't used to having 20 girls screaming for me, on my side. But it's really special to me that I have all of them here."

Carey is tied for first this week in the NCAA individual all-around rankings with her Olympic teammate Sunisa Lee, of Auburn. Fellow Olympian Jordan Chiles, a freshman at UCLA, is 13th

in the all-around rankings and scored a 10.0 on her floor routine last weekend.

"It's so awesome to see all of us from the Olympic team that are now in college doing so well and having fun and enjoying the gymnastics that we're doing. I watch videos of them or I'll watch them on TV and it makes me so happy to see all of us just doing what we love," Carey said.

Carey is excited about the potential of an Olympic reunion at the NCAA championships. It seems a certainty that Carey will qualify as an individual but the goal is for Oregon State to make it as a team.

The Beavers have qualified for the national championships 29 times, most recently in 2019.

"I think we can make it really far. We have the potential, so it's just really having the belief," Dagen said.

Olympics

Continued from B1

True north squabble

Slopestyle gold medalist Max Parrot said fellow Canadian snowboarder Mark McMorris apologized Saturday for saying Parrot only won because of questionable Olympic judging.

Parrot acknowledged to The Associated Press that he failed to fully execute a grab on the first jump of the slopestyle course Monday and said he was lucky the judges didn't see it.

He maintains he still had the best run of the day and earned his first Olympic gold.

McMorris finished third but told CBC on Friday he deserved to beat Parrot and Chinese silver medalist Su Yiming.

Parrot said there were no hard feelings over McMorris' comments.

"He actually came to me earlier today and he apologized for his non-sportsmanship," Parrot said. "I told him no worries."



Matt Slocum/AP

United States' Kenny Agostino (11) celebrates after scoring a goal against Canada at the 2022 Winter Olympics Saturday in Beijing.

The kids are all right

A young and inexperienced U.S. hockey team went toe to toe with Canada in a bruising matchup between the long-time rivals and grinded out a 4-2 victory to remain unbeaten in two games at the Olympics.

"We didn't back down from their physical play," said captain Andy Miele, who led the U.S. with a goal and an assist. "I love the way our team responded."

Thanks to Miele's response goal 70 seconds after Canada scored and 35 saves by Strauss Mann, the U.S. is in the driver's seat to earn a spot in the quarterfinals. Beating Germany on Sunday would put the Americans first in the group and could make them the top seed in the knockout round.

Oldies but goodies

Lindsey Jacobellis won her second gold medal of the Olympics as she teamed with

40-year-old Nick Baumgartner for the title in the new event of mixed snowboardcross.

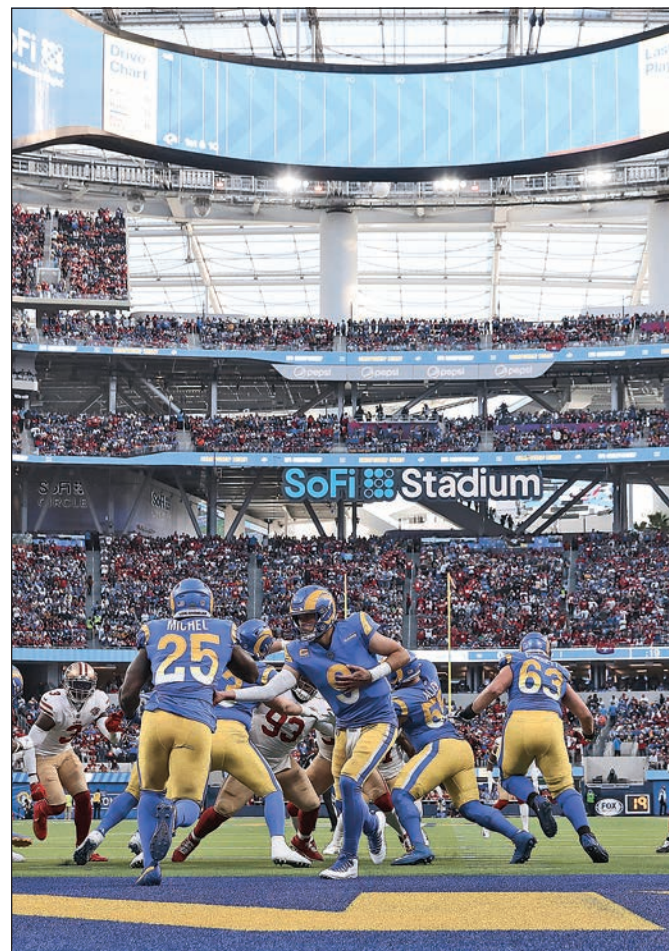
At 40 years, 57 days, Baumgartner becomes the oldest snowboarder to win an Olympic medal. At 36 years, 177 days, Jacobellis, the author of a children's book, is the second-oldest.

"You're never too late to take what you want from life," Baumgartner said.

Dancing out ahead

Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron broke their own world record in the rhythm dance at the Beijing Olympics, scoring 90.83 points to begin the ice dance event. That gave the four-time world champs from France a cushion over Russian rivals Victoria Sinitsina and Nikita Katsalapov heading into the free dance.

Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue were in third, and their American teammates Madison Chock and Evan Bates were in fourth place. The medals will be decided with the free dance Monday morning in Beijing.



Jed Jacobsen/AP

Los Angeles Rams' Matthew Stafford hands off to Sony Michel during the NFC championship game against the San Francisco 49ers Jan. 30 in Inglewood, California.