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CBI tournament -- Oregon 79, Boise State 71: Ducks will play Creighton for title

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John Hunt, The Oregonian

By



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Chris Pietsch/The Associated Press

Oregon's Joevan Catron dunks over Boise State's Robert Arnold. Catron had his third consecutive CBI double-double, with 24 points and 11 rebounds.

EUGENE -- As the wins piled up, Oregon guard Garrett Sim said, the CBI grew more fun.

Now, it's really fun for the Gazelle Group, the tournament organizers, who -- after three rounds of anticlimactic but largely entertaining basketball -- have the most appealing matchup:

Dana Altman's new team against Dana Altman's old team.

With a 79-71 win over Boise State on Wednesday night, the Ducks (19-17) not only kept alive their season and their hopes for 20 wins and a postseason title, but they also earned their first-year coach a trip home.

"Oh, I don't know, it'll be a little awkward," Altman said. "It will be different, but it's a basketball game, and we've just got to go play."

The CBI Tournament championship series against Creighton (22-14) will begin Monday at Qwest Center Omaha. Then the teams travel to Eugene for Game 2 on Wednesday, followed by Game 3 on Friday

at Matthew Knight Arena, if necessary.

Altman coached the Bluejays for 16 seasons and is the school's all-time winningest coach.

"There's people disappointed that I left, and I'm sure there are a lot of people glad that I left," Altman said. "It's about our guys, it's about our players."

Beating Boise State (22-13) proved an easier task than putting away Duquesne two days earlier. The Ducks took a 38-27 lead into halftime on Jay-R Strowbridge's buzzer-beating tip-in and led by as many as 20 points in the second half en route to their fifth win in five games against Boise State.

Only a second-half scoring barrage by Tre Nichols, who scored all 16 of his points in the second half before getting knocked silly on a screen by E.J. Singler, kept the Ducks from a blowout. The Broncos cut the lead to six points with just over a minute left, but that's as close as they would get.

Joevan Catron had his third straight CBI double double, with 24 points and 11 rebounds, and Singler had 18 points for the Ducks.

For the second time in three years, an Oregon school will ride the CBI season-stretching event through March, after Oregon State's CBI championship run in 2009.

Oregon athletic director Rob Mullens said his athletic department "roughly broke even" for the first two CBI games at Matthew Knight Arena and, scanning the crowd Wednesday night, said he expects to "at least break even" for Game 3. In the middle of spring break, 6,157 fans turned out for the Boise game, bringing the three-game average gate to 5,300.

Entrance fees to host the first round of the CBI were \$35,000, then \$50,000 for the quarterfinals and \$75,000 for the semifinals and championship series.

Creighton advanced with an 84-62 win over visiting Central Florida on Wednesday in a game that was never in doubt. The Bluejays, winning their ninth home game in a row, scored the game's first 10 points and took a 44-23 lead into halftime and led by as many as 30 points.

Note: Catron became the sixth player in school history to score 1,000 career points and grab 700 career rebounds.

-- **John Hunt**

The Ducks

College Basketball Invitational

Championship series (best of 3)

Oregon vs. Creighton

Game 1: At Creighton,

5 p.m. Monday

Game 2: At Oregon,

7 p.m. next Wednesday

Game 3: At Oregon, 7 p.m.

April 1 (if necessary)