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CBI Tournament: Oregon 71, Creighton 69: Ducks win CBI title, with some home-court help

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By



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Kevin Clark/The Associated Press

E.J. Singler scores the game-winning basket as Oregon defeats Creighton to win the CBI Tournament championship in Eugene.

EUGENE - That other postseason basketball tournament can only hope for an ending like this.

After the invisible and controversial halfcourt line at Matthew Knight Arena reached up and tripped the Creighton Bluejays, Oregon's E.J. Singler knocked down a bank shot with two seconds left to give **the Ducks a 71-69 victory Friday night** and the CBI Tournament championship.

The 2010-11 season is in the books, and for Oregon, it will be remembered as the first year of the Dana Altman era, as a season of overachievement for the Ducks and also as the first year of this \$227 million arena.

All were on display and playing some very dramatic roles in the last few seconds of the school's longest season.

Oregon (21-18) and Creighton (23-16) - Altman's new and former teams - battled, each making adjustments in the best-of-three series that drew them practically even in a game that featured 14 lead

changes and 10 ties.

The Ducks overcame a poor three-point shooting (4 of 19) night and a rebound deficit (35-25). The Jays overcame the home-court disadvantage and a poor night at the free-throw line (10 of 17). Altman's knowledge of the Jays and the Jays' knowledge of him - everything canceled out, and this game was tied 69-69 with 17 seconds left.



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Kevin Clark/The Associated Press

Fans celebrate with Oregon's Johnathan Loyd after the Ducks defeated Creighton 71-69 Friday at Matthew Knight Arena.

Only a very thin line - two of them, actually, running parallel to each other down the middle of the court - separated these two teams. That's the line that Creighton guard Antoine Young unknowingly stepped over, for an over-and-back call that gave the ball to Oregon in the final seconds.

"That was a huge play," said Singler said.

He could have been talking about his shot, but he meant the over-and-back call. The Ducks called a timeout and Altman instructed his team to work the ball around

and find a one-on-one matchup with around seven seconds left on the clock.

When seven seconds remained, the ball was in Singler's hands. His "nose-to-the-goal" drive, as Altman labeled it and Garrett Sim's basket before it, ended with the ball bouncing softly off the glass and in, with two seconds to go. Creighton, out of timeouts, missed a desperation heave.

"I don't feel as good as I should for winning," said Altman, who coached Creighton for 16 years, who has known one Bluejays player (Kaleb Korver) since he was 10, got a commitment from another (Young) after his freshman year of high school and was there as another (Josh Jones) had heart surgery.

Altman called Young's misstep "unfortunate," but the Ducks had no such compassion. Malcolm Armstead, knowing through experience where the line was, pointed at it to catch the attention of the officials.

"This is a beautiful building, a great atmosphere," Creighton coach Greg McDermott said. "You just wish there was a visible halfcourt line. That's unfortunate, a tough way to lose a game.

Singler said he was struck by the irony of the moment, even as it happened in the tense final seconds of a championship game. After the game, he recalled a game earlier in the season when he stepped over the invisible line, "but no one was pointing."

Singler and Joevan Catron got a chuckle out of the moment. Catron also got a tournament MVP trophy, and he was as important to the Ducks in this game as he was to the team in this season, which began with Oregon picked a distant 10th in the Pacific-10 Conference preseason poll.

Catron had a career-high 29 points on Friday night, 19 coming after halftime and nearly all coming at crucial times.

When Catron was asked how he would remember his final collegiate season, he thought for a moment and smiled.

"Winning," he said. "Just to go out on a win."

Notes: It was the Ducks' 12th 20-win season. ... Catron finished his career with 1,149 points. He also scored in double figures for the 28th time this season and made a career-high 11 field goals. ... It was Singler's 27th double-digit scoring effort of the season. ... Altman posted the second-highest win total (21) of any first-year UO head coach. Only John Warren (30 wins in 1944-45) posted more in his first season. ... Oregon turned the ball over a season-best six times, once in the first half.

-- **John Hunt**

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