

NO. 25 ARIZONA 75, ARIZONA STATE 47

# MESSAGE RECEIVED



KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Arizona guard Josh Green dunks to end a fast break in the Wildcats' 75-47 win over visiting Arizona State on Saturday night at McKale Center. UA hadn't played a game in 14 days.

## Rested UA runs ASU off court in 28-point win

By Bruce Pascoe

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Stop taking silly shots. Feed Zeke. Don't foul so much. Rebound.

Play for Arizona, not yourself. On and on and on came Sean Miller's messages, to the media and to his team over a long two-week break that started after the Wildcats lost three of four games to finish nonconference play.

But in a 75-47 win over ASU at McKale Center on Saturday in their Pac-12 opener, at least for one night, the Wildcats turned mostly into that team. While they hit just 4 of 15 3-pointers, the Wildcats avoided taking many of the ill-advised shots Miller had been upset about, hitting 47.6% overall while scoring efficiently on the break and through Zeke Nnaji inside.

Arizona scored 25 fast-break points and gave Nnaji the ball so he could take more shots than any other UA player, and the efficient

### UP NEXT

- **Who:** No. 25 Arizona (11-3, 1-0) at No. 4 Oregon (12-3, 1-1)
- **When:** 7 p.m. Thursday
- **TV:** ESPN or ESPN2
- **Radio:** 1290-AM, 107.5-FM

freshman big man responded with 17 points on 7-for-11 shooting and 11 rebounds.

Miller's messages were sent, and received.

"Yeah. Definitely," guard Josh Green said. "When you have someone like Zeke as the four man, not many people are his size, height or strength, so it's a big factor for us guards in getting him inside. It creates for our a whole offense — obviously he's gonna bully his player down and if they double, it brings it out for the perimeter players."

Green responded by collecting 12 points and seven rebounds while taking only one 3-pointer

— a miss — after Miller said before the game that he could make the case that anyone shooting 32 percent should never take such a shot (Green was hitting 32.5% from 3).

Instead, Green picked up his points where he gets them the best, on the break. He scored eight of his 12 points after halftime while UA took advantage of many fast-break opportunities: He went uncontested coast-to-coast after he rebounded a missed Sun Devil free throw, and later made a fast-break layup after Nico Mannion stole the ball and threw it to him.

After that play, Nnaji then created his own assist, stealing the ball from Remy Martin, the guy who led the Sun Devils to a season sweep of the Wildcats last year, then dunking it in to give UA a 63-37 lead with 7:24 left.

That was pretty much how it went all night. The Wildcats were motivated and efficient, getting forward Stone Gettings back from head injuries for the first time in

### PAC-12 STANDINGS

Team	Conf.	Overall
Colorado	1-0	12-2
Stanford	1-0	12-2
USC	1-0	12-2
<b>Arizona</b>	<b>1-0</b>	<b>11-3</b>
Oregon	1-1	12-3
Utah	1-1	10-4
Washington State	1-1	10-5
UCLA	1-1	8-7
Oregon State	0-1	10-3
Washington	0-1	10-4
Arizona State	0-1	9-5
California	0-1	6-8

**Saturday's games:** Arizona 75, ASU 47; Washington State 79, UCLA 71, OT; Oregon 69, Utah 64

**Sunday's games:** Oregon State at Colorado, 4 p.m. (ESPN); USC at Washington, 8 p.m. (FS1)

in double figures with Mannion and Dylan Smith adding 10 points each, while 10 total players scored.

They were fast, but not too fast for Miller's liking.

"We want to play at a fast tempo ... it makes sense with Nico and the team that we have," Miller said. "But one of the things that we've gone through is you can play at a fast pace, and sometimes shoot yourself in the foot. Taking challenged 3s, and ignoring somebody that's very efficient around the post (in) Zeke."

"I think that it's up to us to make good decisions. You have to take the good early opportunity but when we didn't take that to-night, we ran better offense, and we were more balanced. And we have a team of guys on offense that can do a lot of things."

While the Wildcats fouled more than Miller would like — Green even picked up a second-half

See BASKETBALL, AB2

## Cats play with energy and toughness after break, wreck Sun Devils

For two weeks — Arizona's longest in-season break without a basketball game since 1944-45 — the Wildcats sat and stewed, troubled by an unexpected December decline, its only victory in 34 days coming against Nebraska-Omaha.

What was this, 1983? Even Ben Lindsey's ill-fated, 4-24 UA team of 1982-83 had a better December, winning three times before losing at home to Illinois Wesleyan and effectively igniting a search that led to Lute Olson.

This time the UA's December descent didn't trigger a search as much as it led to a resolve that it couldn't play much worse than it did in losses to Baylor, Gonzaga and St. John's.

It led to a collective commitment that if nothing else it could play harder and smarter, start to finish, than it did in December. Into this trap walked Arizona State, itself reeling from a 40-point loss to St. Mary's, a bit shy on size and worried about



Greg Hansen

its ability to shoot straight — the Sun Devils entered Saturday's game ranked No. 279 nationally in 3-point shooting and 203rd in foul shooting.

And just like that the Sun Devils missed their first six foul shots — who ever does that? — went 1 for 9 from 3-point distance and trailed 36-17 at halftime.

So frustrated was ASU coach Bobby Hurley that he snapped his hands together to call a timeout with 51 seconds left in the half, exasperated. It wasn't that Arizona played so well, it's that the UA's energy and toughness — two elements often missing in December — kicked in.

Arizona won 75-47. The only team in America to have a worse



KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Arizona center Chase Jeter tries to force his way along the baseline against Arizona State forward Romello White in the first half.

night than ASU were the New England Patriots.

"When we go 3 for 21 from the 3-point line, this is what we're looking at," said Hurley, who was impressed by Arizona's size. "They had an army of big guys

coming off the bench. We didn't really have in inside presence." No inside game. No outside game. No chance.

After scoring 58 points against Arizona in a rare two-game sweep last year, Sun Devils guard Remy

Martin had just five points when the Wildcats expanded their lead to 30 points on Saturday. Ordinarily, Martin is one of the Pac-12's leading players, a ball of basketball fire.

But on Saturday all the fire came from Sean Miller's team. And have you ever seen a more awe-inspiring alley-oop dunk than the one from UA freshman Christian Koloko as Arizona built its lead to 30 points? It was that kind of a redemptive night at McKale.

Miller used the unusually long break as a trouble-shooter. He made clear what he expected from each of his seven first-year players — "clarifying roles," he said — and one of those corrections was getting freshman Zeke Nnaji more involved in the offense.

Even Miller admitted he "probably could've done a better job" running more of his club's offense through Nnaji in the first 13 games, but better late than

See HANSEN, AB2

