

basketball

Hunt makes contribution to team as a steady performer off bench

By MARK STEWART
Of the Emerald

Like many athletes who are benched after having started for a good part of their career, Vickie Hunt entertained thoughts of quitting basketball last year.

"I sat on the bench the last couple of years," Hunt said. "I had to get used to the program and Elwin (Heiny, the women's coach). Last year I was ready to call it quits, because I wasn't getting enough playing time."

Hunt didn't play basketball at all during the summer. When she came back to campus last fall, she enrolled in a men's basketball class. It was enough to rekindle her desire for wanting to play on the women's team again.

"I decided I was not ready to quit the program until I felt I was a second rate player," Hunt said. "I don't think I am. That might sound

selfish, but I wanted to contribute to the team."

"She's very aggressive, and has become an offensive threat and a floor leader," said Heiny. "In the past she wasn't."

"Last year she showed a lack of court sense, she did not play loose. This year she is playing differently. It's mostly due to the men's basketball classes. Against the man-to-man defense she's really good. She's able to go to the bucket."

Hunt this year realized that although she doesn't start often, she still can contribute to the team. In fact, now she prefers coming off the bench instead of starting.

"I like sitting there," Hunt said, "to think about what I have to do. I can see the offense and defense setting up. Plus I don't have to take the pressure of starting."

Hunt, the only returning senior

on the team, started her basketball career young.

"I got turned on to basketball in the 7th grade. I had enough speed that I could get right by them. That excited me. After I got into it, I liked playing defense."

Hunt played on a "good" team at Marshfield High in Coos Bay "because other girls played with their brothers and were taller, and we were able to run the break decently." After high school, Hunt decided on Oregon because two of her ex-teammates played here, and they helped woo her.

Her first two years here she started, but the team lost. She attributed that to bad coaching. Then came Heiny last year.

"Hiring Elwin was the best thing they could have done," Hunt said. But with Heiny came the bench for Hunt.

With the advent of Title IX, women's athletics are getting more money and more attention. Hunt said the attention is appreciated.

"I can't imagine where it's (women's athletics) going," Hunt said. "Most people we talk to say they'd rather watch us play instead of the guys. That really gives us support."

"I like to see the women's program growing, but I don't want to see us fall into a rut like the men's team, being entertainment. The women's program has always had an educational basis."

Hunt, like many other athletes,



Photo by Mark Stewart

Vickie Hunt thought about quitting for a while, but she has stuck it out and has settled into a new role — the steady bench performer.

will not graduate with her class this June, but will come back in the fall to finish up her studies. A physical education major, Hunt wants to coach at the junior high level.

"I'm pumped up on teaching junior high. My first priority is coaching basketball and second priority is track. In 10 years or so I'd like to ultimately coach at the junior college level, but not at the collegiate level."

Hunt has been coaching track and field at the junior high level the

past two years and will coach again this spring. She has coached at the same school the past two years for a purpose — getting a job after graduation at that school. And this year, she will get paid for her time.

"I've been concentrating on one school, getting to know the administration and teachers. I've been coaching at Cal Young and will get paid for it this year. It's been a long, slow process."

Before she can start thinking about track, Hunt will have to think about other things. Like winning basketball games.

"When winter term comes, that's it, basketball and studying," said Hunt. "When I was a frosh I had time left over for myself. Now it's travel and practice. It'd be great if I could just play basketball and not go to school."

"We've a great team. In my four years here, this has been the best team. The personalities have been the best; they all meld together well. We're thinking about winning regionals and going to nationals at Long Beach."

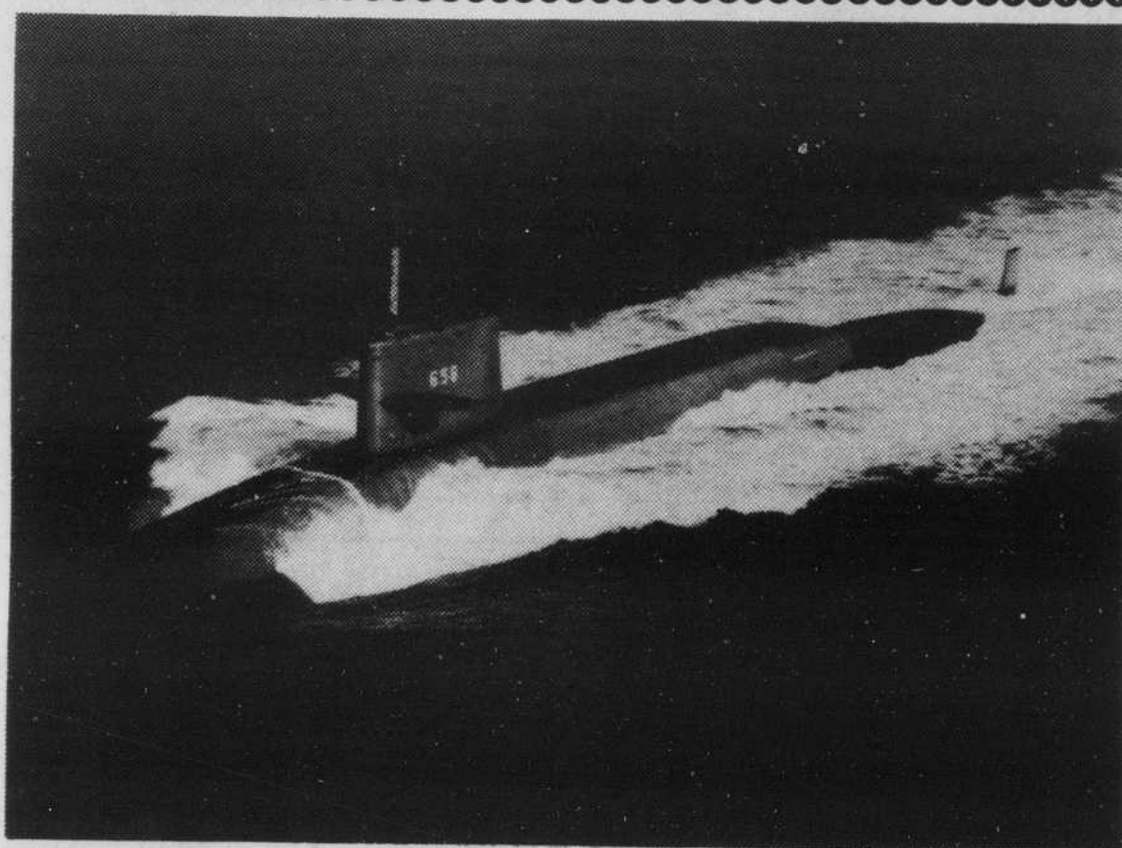
"It's the best way," she smiled, "to end up a basketball career."

"I've enjoyed playing. That's it for me, having a good time. I'm pretty excited about coaching. Junior High is low key. Maybe that's why I'm interested, there's no pressure to win the title."



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