



Duck men  
shootout  
in Alaska

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# SIDELINES

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# KOFI KYEI

Stepping onto the shiny floor of Mac Court to play a basketball game in front of TV cameras, a blaring band and 8,000 cheering fans can be an intimidating experience the first time around, and almost overwhelming when those emotion-packed conditions aren't expected.

So sums up 6-foot-10 Kofi Kyei's (pronounced "Chay") impressions of his first public performance with the Oregon Ducks in the November 9 exhibition match against the University of Victoria. Kyei, a twenty-one-year-old business administration and pre-engineering major, is a citizen of Ghana here on a basketball scholarship.

The day of the match, Kyei explains, he was "not nervous. I didn't know how it was going to be." Hoping he wouldn't play during the game, Kyei became tense when he got on the court and saw "all those people."

At home in Ghana, where he was a member of the country's national basketball team and a student at the University of Science and Technology, Kyei had never played basketball before more than 500 people, in a culture that views basketball much differently than do American sports fans.

**'I'm learning things every day.'**

— Kofi Kyei

Soccer, known to the English-speaking Ghanese as 'football,' is "the major sport," Kyei says. "Basketball is a very minor sport. I just heard about the crowds here." Kyei describes the basketball fans in Ghana compared to their American counterparts as "not as involved. They would cheer a lot if something happened, but I still went out and enjoyed myself."

Though admitting his initial apprehension to the number of Duck fans at the Victoria game was a problem, he points out the the crowd's reaction to him was "marvelous." The support he received, he believes, made him feel like "one of the family" and helped to get him relaxed.

By next month, Kyei hopes to be "settled down, and doing more than the motions" on the team. The biggest challenge to this goal is the adaptation to a different style of play. Kyei describes Ghana's national team practice as based "more on fundamentals than getting in shape," while the Oregon players learn "a lot of plays against many offensive and defensive," plays that can be "called at any time."

Kyei is very positive about his new team, describing all the players as "great," and adds that in the long run he wants "to be the best player I can be so my team can win all the time."

However, it was academic as well as basketball considerations that brought Kyei to Oregon, explains head coach Don Monson. He cites two

crucial factors that led to the decision to offer Kyei the scholarship.

The first reason was that Kyei is a "good student"; there are not many concerns academically." The second factor was Monson's impression of Kyei's mannerisms after the coach had talked with the student.

"He wanted to progress...and seemed like a positive kid."

Kyei's progress so far has been "fine," Monson adds. While not accustomed to American "intensiveness and aggressiveness" and despite sustaining a hamstring pull that brought eight days missed practice, Monson praises Kyei as "very coachable" and well-liked by his teammates.

Jumping and timing are Kyei's best skills, Monson says, while his shooting has improved, but problems of hesitating still need work.

While the switch in lifestyle from his native country may be difficult, Kyei is not the first of his family to travel abroad. His father, a purchasing officer for International Tobacco Ghana Ltd., did postgraduate work in Europe. One of the younger Kyei's sisters has been to Italy, another to the Ivory coast, and a brother to Nigeria.

Though not the first of the family to travel, Kyei's arrival in America, considering its foreign reputation, was nevertheless in some measure daring. The view of the United States as a violent place is typical in Ghana, Kyei explains, adding that he even heard one woman vow never to come to America because she didn't want "to die early."

Feeling this statement was too extreme, Kyei believed places of learning would be different, without the "dog-eat-dog atmosphere." He finds Americans so far "friendly", people who go "out of their way" to help.

Declining a further elaboration of his views on America, Kyei will say only that "I'm learning things every day."

An indication of his approach to his new challenges is perhaps reflected in his choice of one of the men he most admires, Moses Malone of the Philadelphia Seventy-Sixers. "You can see how he always goes out and gives his all," explains Kyei.



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