

Washington returns to his basketball roots

By Adam Worcester
Of the Emerald

Although he was a National Basketball Association star for nearly nine years, Kermit Washington has no qualms about riding the bench. In fact, he enjoys it.

"I love it," the newest Stanford Cardinal assistant coach says of his duties with the team. "I love working with the players."

Washington, who played his final three NBA seasons for the Portland Trail Blazers, does a little of everything for Stanford. During games, he charts certain statistics, such as rebounds, turnovers and shots for Cardinal head coach Tom Davis. "It's not real important," Washington says. "But it has to get done."

Mostly, though, he works with players "wherever they need me." Washington helps with weightlifting, conditioning, basketball skills and even personal problems. And after nine seasons in the NBA, in addition to a glittery college career under John Wooden at UCLA, Washington believes he has something to give back to the game.

"When you've played the game, you can see some things the players can't. You can maybe tell

'When you've played the game, you can see some things the players can't.'

— Kermit Washington

how a player feels in a certain situation, what's going through his mind," Washington says.

Davis banked on this type of experience when he hired Washington to the Stanford staff, hoping his young team could parlay it into a few more victories. This has yet to happen (the Cardinal stands 3-13 in league play, 11-15 overall), but Washington is confident the team will improve and the victories will eventually come.

One thing can be said with certainty of Washington: when he wants a player's attention, he gets it. He still stands 6-8 and weighs 240 pounds, as he did when a chronic back injury ended his NBA career three years ago. He is probably the biggest college coach west of Georgetown University's John Thompson.

So far, Washington's transition from the professional to the college game has been smooth.

"I like the college game," he says. "I like the intensity of college kids and the crowd." Except for Trail Blazer fans, Washington says college crowds are much more vocal than pro ones. He says the main difference between the college and pro games is that "the ability of the pro players is so much greater."

Yet, Washington says the ability of college players is improving every year. He claims that players today are better athletes than when he was in school.

"Some kids were only football players before. Now they're basketball players too," he says. "Plus they lift weights and condition much more than we did."

Despite his love for his job, Washington says he has no plans to become a head coach.

"I don't have time," he says. "I still work in Portland for Far West Federal Bank. And I have to fly up here for my Sixth Man Foundation work, and I have a project for kids in San Diego." And, of course, he has his Stanford duties.

Washington's reunion at McArthur Court was a rude one as the Ducks handed the Cardinal a 68-61 defeat Saturday afternoon. Despite the loss, Washington still has fond memories of the area and his old basketball playing days.

Washington says he doesn't miss Portland, where he had his most productive NBA seasons, but "I miss my friends. But I have friends I miss in L.A. and San Diego too."

Nonetheless, Washington admits he harbors a soft spot in his heart for the Rose City and the state of Oregon.

"I had a good time playing up there," he says. "The fans were great and people treated me well."



Emerald file photo
Stanford assistant coach Kermit Washington (right) has found a new role in basketball after enjoying a nine-season career in the pros.

Sports Shorts

Oregon men's basketball player **Blair Rasmussen** and the University of Southern California's **Wayne Carlander** were voted as co-

Pacific-10 Conference players of the week by league officials Monday. Also guard **Anthony Taylor** was named to the Pac-10's All-Freshman team.

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