

Lucas deals with high basketball expectations

Academics also a key for center/forward

By Tracy Sumner
Emerald Sports Editor

After two seasons of Pacific-10 Conference basketball competition and an international tour, Oregon center/forward Richard Lucas knows what his coach expects of him.

Oregon basketball coach Don Monson said the team is counting on Lucas, who averaged 5.2 points and 4.8 rebounds per game last season, to deliver on offense and defense this season.

"There's no question in my mind he can rebound and run the court and do the things you need from a center," Monson said.

For his part, Lucas agrees with his coach's assessment.

"I know they are asking a lot," Lucas said. "They're asking me to rebound and score inside."

"But I have a lot of experience," he said. "I started 19 games last season and five games as a freshmen. I've played a lot of minutes against some really good competition."

"I have a feeling now of what it takes to play in the Pac-10," he said. "I can handle the responsibility."

After his sophomore season, Lucas spent part of last summer touring Hungary with a Pacific-10 all-star team. He says the experience against the physical competition on the tour will pay dividends during the Pac-10 season.

"First of all, I don't under-

stand why they even have refs overseas," Lucas said. "Basically it's like football. It's very physical. The players are big and strong and not very quick."

"That will help me in the fact that I'm used to banging and rebounding against bigger guys," he said.

Lucas, who averaged 12.7 points on the tour and was the team's third leading rebounder, said the competition within his own team also helped push him to improve during the tour.

"There were some very good players on that team," Lucas said. "For me to play, to gain Jim Harrick's (the coach of UCLA and the touring team) confidence, I had to work hard and improve myself."

At 6-foot-7, Lucas knows he will often be overmatched height-wise by some of the bigger Pac-10 front-court players. But he said he can use other basketball skills to compensate for his lack of height.

"I believe I can jump as well as any of the 6-8 or 6-9 guys," Lucas said. "I have to use my quickness to stay a step ahead of my competition."

"I have to get in front of players on defense," he said. "If they get the ball, I have to get behind them and make them shoot over me."

Lucas' desire to improve himself is not limited to his performance on the basketball floor, but includes what he does in the classroom.

Lucas, a junior pre-journalism major, said other schools recruited him, but Monson and his recruiting staff persuaded him to come to Oregon by stressing academics on their recruiting trips.



Photo by Martin Thiel

After playing on an all-star team touring Europe this summer, Richard Lucas is ready to fulfill the expectations of the Duck coaching staff this season.

Turn to Lucas, Page 13



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