

Brandon brings winning tradition to Oregon

Adds excitement to Oregon hoop

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Reporter

Terrell Brandon has always been a winner.

First it was helping Portland's Grant High School win a state basketball championship as a sophomore. As a senior, the state's Class AAA co-player of the year led the Generals to another state championship, averaging 24 points, 9.5 rebounds and 5.5 assists a game.

Then it was helping the Grant track team to a state title by winning the triple jump and running on the Generals' record-setting 4 x 100 meter relay team.

Now, after sitting out last season because of Proposition 48, Brandon has brought his winning ways to the Oregon basketball team and has led the Ducks to a 2-2 Pacific-10 record and a 7-6 overall mark.

Not only is Brandon a winner, but a leader, a trait that every good point guard must have. It's not surprising then that 5-foot-11 sophomore was able to overcome sitting out last season to breath new life in a team that was 3-15 in the Pac-10 last season and 8-21 overall.

Head coach Don Monson feels that having a player of Brandon's ability to take over when the game is on the line is one of the biggest differences between this season's team and last year's.

"You need a player like that," Monson said. "That's one thing we lacked last year. We had (Randy) Grant in that role but he was underneath the basket and you need a guard in that role — somebody that can handle the basketball."

Brandon admits it wasn't easy sitting out last season and is happy to be back on the court.

"It was difficult to sit out when you're used to playing all of the time," Brandon said. "A lot of people were behind me. The coaching staff, Mr. Bill Byrne, everybody was telling me to stick with it and that I'd get a chance to play."

Brandon thought about going to a ju-

nior college last season where he would have been able to play immediately instead of sitting out a year. But as things turned out, he's glad he stuck with staying at Oregon.

"I thought about going to a junior college in November because the academics were strenuous," Brandon said. "My parents stayed on me and encouraged me. They told me they were behind me with whatever I did. I'm happy I stayed."

Although the coaching staff knew what Brandon could do, it was hard to tell how long it would take him to overcome what he had missed last year.

"I thought I would be a little rusty," Brandon said. "I played a lot of intramural ball and that keeps you fairly in shape but I worried about being ready for this season."

In a way, the year off may have benefited Brandon. Losing a year of eligibility wasn't advantageous, but Brandon didn't have to fulfill a lot of people's expectations as a result.

"I didn't feel any pressure," Brandon said. "I just wanted to do what I could."

"I didn't have any expectations," Monson added. "I knew he would be good but in all reality he's been better than I thought he would be."

What Brandon has done this year is put fun and excitement back into the program, something few players can do singlehandedly.

Brandon scored 27 points in a home upset of then No. 2 ranked Arizona in the conference opener for both teams. He also had 27 points in a win over Utah. In both contests Brandon simply took over the game down the stretch. He also averaged 19.7 points in three Far West Classic games and was named to the all-tournament team.

However, it's the Arizona win Brandon likes to savor.

"Beating Arizona was definitely a milestone for me," he said. "They were ranked No. 2 at the time and that win was definitely inspirational."

Brandon has posted some impressive numbers for Oregon, leading the Ducks in scoring at 16.5 points per game and



Photo by Mark Ylen

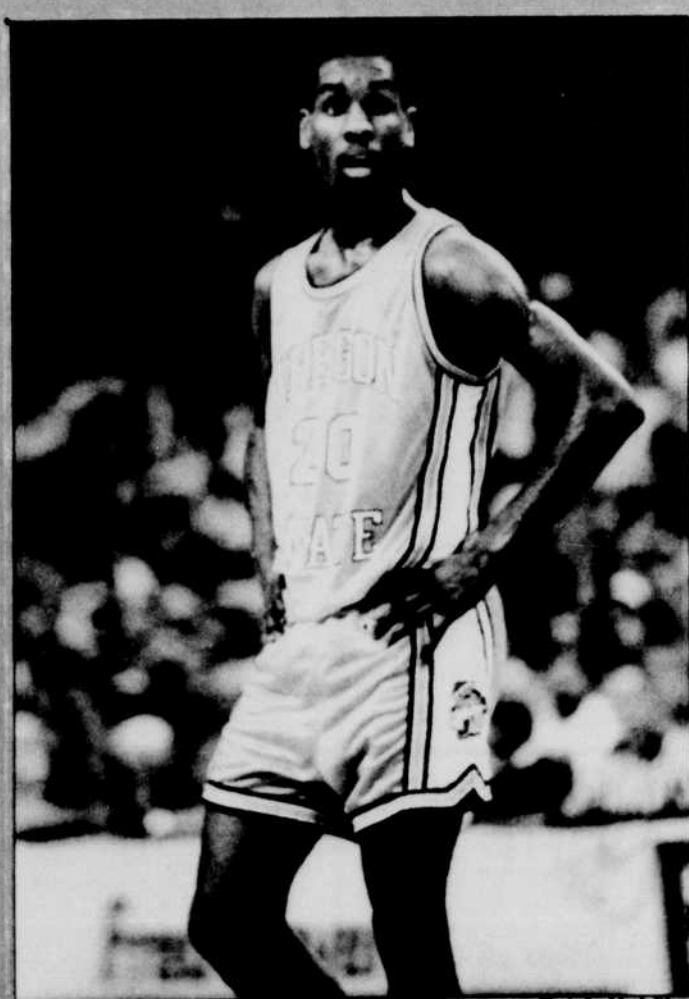
Terrell Brandon's fast-break style of basketball has brought new excitement into Oregon basketball this season.

assists with 6.9 per contest. He is also shooting 50.3 percent from the floor, but his ball-handling and ability to run the fast break are the two biggest areas where Brandon has made a difference for the Ducks.

Oregon is averaging 70.6 points per

game, up from 67.4 points last season. The Ducks had almost 130 more turnovers than assists last season; this season they have more assists than turnovers.

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Gary Payton is passing his way toward the NCAA all-time assist record.

Payton leads Beavers by example, shoots toward NCAA record books

By Ashley Conklin
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Gary Payton only knows how to play basketball one way — giving 100 percent all of the time.

And so if people see the way the Oregon State point guard plays as cocky or arrogant, that's a misnomer. The fact is, Payton demands excellence from himself and from his teammates, and that's usually what he gets it.

"I'm just doing my job out there," the 6-foot-4 senior said. "I'm just a competitor and since I was in high school, that's the only way I've known how to play."

Payton knows how to play. He can do just about anything the Beavers need to win, whether it be hitting a three-pointer, giving a teammate a pass on the fast break, or driving to the basket for a lay-in.

"The one thing that comes to mind is that he's a competitor and a winner," Oregon State coach Jim Anderson said. "Secondly he's a complete player and third, he doesn't have many peers when it comes to passing the basketball."

Payton has used the pass as his ticket to the NCAA record book, on pace to break the career-assist record held by Syracuse's Sherman Douglas. With 830 career assists, Payton trails only Douglas' 960 and UCLA's Pooh Richardson (833 assists) all-time.

The NCAA assist record is something Payton set as a goal before the season started.

"That was basically my goal," he said. "I

feel it's a realistic goal and something I want as well as going far in the NCAA Tournament."

This season Payton has done it all in leading the Beavers to a 4-0 Pacific-10 record and an overall mark of 11-2 that has Oregon State ranked No. 22 in the latest Associated Press poll. He leads the Beavers in scoring (27.1 points per game), assists (9.8 per game), steals (3.7 per game) and is second in rebounding (4.4 per game).

Although the numbers might be a little higher than Anderson expected, Anderson said he knew Payton would do whatever was necessary for Oregon State to continue to win.

"It's a job he expects and knew was his from the start," Anderson said. "All past indications showed he would be doing what he is."

"Being a senior this year, he has continued that role," he added. "He leads us by example on the court and his work ethic gets everybody else on the team going. And certainly he is our statistical leader as well."

Many thought Payton might not be back for his senior season, leaving for the NBA after coach Ralph Miller retired last season. However, Payton said it wasn't a difficult decision to stay in school and he wanted to play under Anderson.

"It wasn't a big decision for me," Payton said. "If I wanted to go (to the NBA) and make \$500,000 a year or whatever, I thought I could stay in school and get \$1 million a year or whatever. I'll have my degree in two or three more terms so I wanted to stay in school and get more

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