

Selden answers point guard question for Ducks

By Cam Sivesind
Emerald Sports Reporter

A true point guard is something the women's basketball team at Oregon has not had for some time.

Freshman Vanessa Selden has stepped in this year and provided the Ducks with a legitimate point guard. And she has done it with style.

Selden leads the team in steals with 27 in 12 games. She is second in assists with 38 behind senior Jacquie Semeniuk's 55. Besides starting every game for the Ducks, the freshman guard from Antioch, Cal., has averaged 31 minutes in non-conference games and 38 minutes a game in Pacific-10 Conference action.

"We felt that she was one of the best point guards we could get," coach Elwin Heiny said. "She was exactly what we felt we needed in a team and we were fortunate to get her."

With a father in the Navy, Selden is well-traveled. Selden was born in Morocco and lived there for three years. She was in Japan for seven years where she was introduced to basketball. She has also lived in Virginia and New Jersey.

Heiny can thank Selden's mom for the abilities this high school record breaker possesses.

"In Japan, my mom made me play basketball," Selden said. "I didn't want to play basketball."

Smart move mom. Selden has a list of accolades from high school that would make any mom proud.

Selden was named East Bay Player of the Year by the East Bay Prep Writers Association her senior year at Antioch High School. Selden broke the California state single-season record for steals with 252 and finished second on the all-time list (674) behind only the Harlem Globetrotters' Jackie White.

The wonder guard averaged 22 points a game her junior year to lead the Diablo Valley Athletic Conference. Her senior

year, Selden averaged 19.9 points a game, 8.4 steals and 4.3 assists. She was an all-league pick each of her four years at Antioch.

So why did Selden not want to play basketball way back in the fourth grade?

"I don't know. I didn't think about basketball. My mom drug me to practice," Selden said. "She took my hand and she made me go to practice. I didn't like it until like a week later."

Playing basketball in Japan was a little different for Selden because there were no girl teams.

"I played with the guys most of my life until I got to Antioch, Calif., because they didn't have a girls team," Selden said. "In Japan they just had guys teams so I played with them. Playing with the guys is different, more aggressive."

Selden has two brothers as well, a younger one that is 10 and an older brother that is 21. Selden said she played a lot of basketball with her older brother which added to her court experience.

And where does dad fit into all of this?

"My dad never saw me play basketball in high school until my senior year," Selden said. "He retired last year (from the Navy) and he was with me for every game my senior year."

Heiny lists Selden's strengths as her ability to handle the ball, her ability to pass and quick hands on defense. Heiny added that Selden is a very complete player and was impressed with the fact that she did have to be converted to a point guard like so many players are.

"I think she's potentially the best point guard we've ever had here," Heiny said. "She definitely possesses skills like we've never had before in a player."

Alison Robertson, the former basketball great for Oregon as Alison Lang and now assistant coach, played a big role in recruiting Selden.

"She is smart as a point

guard which we badly needed," Robertson said. "Jacquie had been playing point guard for us and did a really good job."

Robertson had mostly praise for Oregon's first true point guard in three years.

"Her ball handling skills are just remarkable," Robertson said. "They are even more remarkable because she's a freshman."

"That's really hard for freshman to be able to have that much control and smarts. Usually it takes someone a couple of years to get up to that level and she's already there."

Recruiting Selden was a great move for Oregon basketball, but according to Selden it was not a hard decision to choose Oregon as her college.

"On my recruiting trip I liked the people, the school, and unlike other schools they stressed more on academics," Selden said. "Academics was the first thing, then basketball whereas other schools it was basketball and then school. That's important to me and my parents and I thought I'd get a good education."

The 5-foot-7 point guard, who has guided Oregon to an 8-4 overall record so far this season, misses her family back home in California, but the Selden show must go on.

Selden does have her weaknesses. But, as a freshman weaknesses are expected. Heiny sees her scoring ability and shooting as a weakness. Selden is shooting a poor .356 percent from the field and .657 from the free throw line.

"Shooting often starts with your footwork and it means you've got to go in strong with the shot," Heiny said. "Sometimes she puts it up a little lackadaisical and doesn't score. I think once she gets set and goes up strong she could become a real threat."

Semeniuk filled the point guard role for the Ducks last year, but that was not her natural position. The senior guard and forward still helps out on running the floor while Selden gets more comfortable at the college level.

"On the floor a lot of times



Photo by Kate Jost

Freshman Vanessa Selden has given the women's basketball team it's first true point guard in years.

Jacquie will still determine a lot of the things that happen," Heiny said. "But in terms of running the offense Vanessa is clearly the one that has to get people under control. She's the quarterback."

For the immediate future, Selden wants to improve her own play.

"I like competition and I want to be good. I've got a ways to go and I'm working to be really good. I've got four years to improve myself," Selden said.

Farther down the road Selden hopes to make it to the NCAA finals so she can be on

television. She also has a dream of playing in the Olympics either in 1992 or 1996.

Robertson sees Selden's career at Oregon as an exciting one.

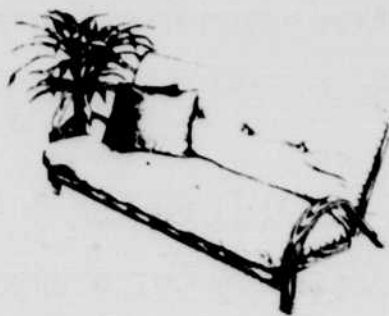
"I hope I'm here in four years to see her in her senior year," Robertson said. "She'll be exciting to watch. She's a crowd pleaser. She's a little bit fancy with some of the things that she does."

And those who will be entertained by Selden's play have mom to thank.

"I thank her," Selden said appreciatively of her mom. "She reminds me of that too."

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bounding. I need to help the team a lot more. As long as I'm playing, my shots and my points will come in the flow."

As his senior year progresses, Reynolds is realizing that his

career at the University is quickly coming to a close.

"Last year zoomed past, and this year is halfway over," he said. "But you have to go with the flow because life goes on."

As a senior, Reynolds also realizes that life goes on beyond college basketball, but remains uncertain about his post-university plans.

"I want to finish school — graduation is the most important thing. Whatever comes after that, if basketball drops in, we'll see," he said.

When his college basketball career comes to an end, Reynolds wants to be able to remember his years at Oregon proudly.

"I want to look back and say that I gave it all I had," he said. "I don't want to hang my head and wish that I had one more year."

Reynolds also hopes that his career will have a lasting impact on those who have come in contact with Duck basketball in the last two years.

"When I leave, I want them to say, 'he was an explosive player. Once he gets in his flow, it's hard to stop him.'"

Friday, January 12, 1990

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