

Kasperski sad to see career end, looks to future

Senior leaves lasting legacy

By Cam Sivesind
Emerald Sports Reporter

She is only four games away from ending her illustrious career as a Duck, her team has fallen farther from post-season possibilities, and she has an injury to her right foot, but Stefanie Kasperski can still smile.

The 6-foot-7 native of Hamburg, West Germany has been the focal point of Oregon women's basketball since she arrived here in 1986.

Kasperski makes it clear, however, that she is not finished yet. With a nationally televised game Thursday night in McArthur Court against Arizona State, and her final home game in the Pit against Arizona Saturday, Oregon's most prolific center still has something left to show.

"We have four games left, and I'm just trying to make the best out of it," Kasperski said. "I still have some things I want to do, in those two home games especially."

That fierce, competitive atti-

No one is happier than Oregon coach Elwin Heiny to have had a player like Kasperski on his team, and no one is sadder to see her career at Oregon ending.

"She's added so much to our program. From the beginning, even her freshman year, she was very good in terms of intimidation. Her presence intimidated opponents," Heiny said.

Heiny was impressed with Kasperski's talents from the start, noting her knack for holding on to the ball. That's a characteristic that is rare in most post players, Heiny said. Good balance is another rare aspect of Kasperski's play.

"Her game from [being a freshman on] has improved drastically. She's become a greater factor inside defensively, and offensively now teams have to change their defense to deal with her," Heiny said. "She's clearly one of, if not the, top post players in the nation. Obviously her absence will cause some new problems for us. We will have to make

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tude is something that has rubbed off on fellow teammates, and a reason the Ducks won the National Invitational Tournament last year.

"She's a hard worker. She's been an excellent role model for this team. She expects a lot of us," said fellow teammate and classmate Jacque Semeniuk. "She does have high expectations. I know she does for herself, and that's obvious through her achievements in school and in basketball."

And the list of achievements for Kasperski is a long one, on and off the court.

Kasperski owns the career Pacific-10 Conference mark in rebounding (956), field goals (787), and blocked shots (388). She owns the Pac-10 single-season record for field goal percentage (60.6 in 1988-89), and for blocked shots (119 in 1987-88).

Oregon single-season records are also on the list: 13 blocked shots vs. W. Kentucky in 1987; 16 field goals vs. Cal this year; and 14 free throws vs. Arizona State in 1989.

Off the court, Kasperski's 3.95 GPA as a biology major speaks for itself.

The combination of grades and athletics has made Kasperski a two-time all-conference selection, and allowed her to be one of five players named to the GTE Academic All-America first team in 1989.

"I've always said it's not that big of a deal balancing school and athletics. You just have to manage your time pretty well," Kasperski said. "I think there is no excuse for not staying in school. You don't have to get As, but if you just go to class and do the work, you can get through."

some adjustments."

The praise goes both ways. Kasperski has the utmost respect for Heiny.

"I think Elwin is a great coach. I'm thankful that he was the coach here," Kasperski said. "I think he's the kind of coach that can just look at you and make the best out of your abilities. He never tried to make me anything that I'm not."

Kasperski added that she likes the freedom that Heiny gives his players on and off the court.

Adjusting from her big move from Hamburg to a university in the U.S. was less of a shock than Kasperski had planned.

"I thought it would be hard, but the community was great. They just help you wherever they can," Kasperski said.

Kasperski credits helpful teachers, a supportive coaching staff, especially Heiny, and her teammates with making her adjustment easier.

Support from her parents was also a plus to making her transition to the states smooth.

"My parents told me to do whatever I felt was best," Kasperski said. "When I got the opportunity to come over here, sure they didn't want me to leave, but they thought it would be a good experience for me. They thought it was a good thing to start growing up."

Changes in Kasperski since her freshman year is something her teammates have noticed.

"She's a great person. She's a lot of fun," said Michelle Eble, the three-point shooting guard who will also be playing her final game at Mac Court Saturday. "She's changed a lot, and grown a lot since she was a freshman. I think we've all kind of grown together."



Photo by Andre Kanier

Stephanie Kasperski has excelled both on the court and in the classroom during her career at Oregon.

together."

Semeniuk is in total agreement.

"Playing with Stefanie has been a total privilege for me," Semeniuk said. "I've got to know her really well as a person on and off the court. She's really grown a lot as a person. She's come out of her shell."

How Kasperski got started in basketball leads back to her size, but not for reasons one would expect. No one pressured her to play basketball, Kasperski said.

Her sixth grade physical education teacher suggested she pursue an athletic activity to correct her posture. It seems the unusually tall sixth-grader was stooping to be at her level of her classmates.

Kasperski took up table tennis and basketball, and thankfully opted for the latter. She next met the most influential person on her basketball career.

"The biggest basketball influence on me was Klaus Mewes. He coached me from when I started playing basketball," Kasperski said.

Mewes coached the city team in Hamburg, as well as the junior and senior national teams.

Back to the present, Kasperski is focusing her attention to her final four contests.

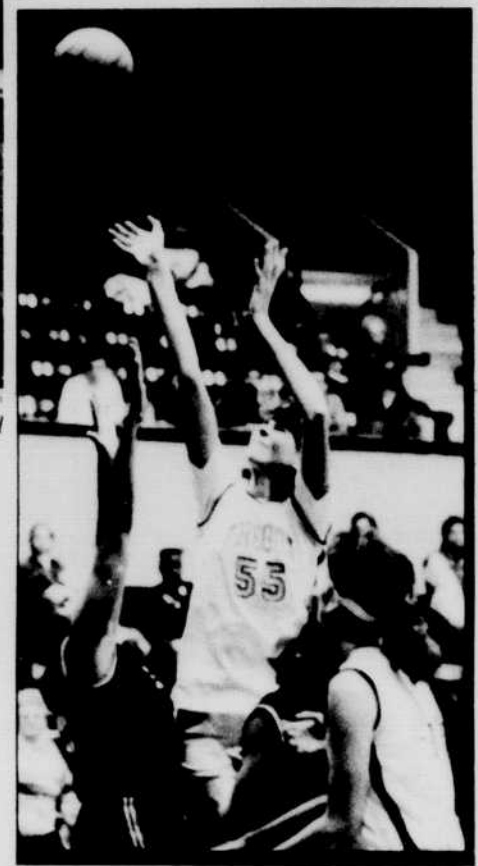
The injury Kasperski received to her right foot against UCLA last weekend will not keep her from playing in her final home games at Mac Court.

"It hurts right now. I can't put my heel on the floor," Kasperski said. "I'm going to play. These are my last two home games, and nothing is going to keep me from playing."

It has been a little frustrating this season, Kasperski admits, but there is no sign of giving up among her team members.

After she graduates at the end of this term, Kasperski has a couple of options in mind.

Kasperski said she might stay at Oregon and do some postgraduate work, and start graduate school the term after



that.

But because of her frustrating season, Oregon's record setter is considering going back to West Germany to play on the German National Team.

"I feel like by going back to and playing on the German National Team I could still reach something," Kasperski said. "I'm not saying I didn't reach anything here, or we didn't reach anything here this year."

But that is Kasperski for you — always looking for more, and always looking to improve her own game.