

# Duck turned Hawk enjoying life in NBA



**FROM THE SIDELINES**

BY JAKE BERG

**P**ORTLAND — If anyone is keeping track of the greatest understatement made during this sports year, give Blair Rasmussen the lead right now.

"I understand the Ducks are having a tough year," Rasmussen said of his alma mater's 5-10 record.

Rasmussen himself saw some tough years while a star for the Oregon men's basketball team, but currently, the 7-foot, 260-pound center is enjoying life among the world's basketball elite as a starter for the Atlanta Hawks of the National Basketball Association.

"It's a fun way to make a living," Rasmussen said after a close 125-117 loss to the Portland Trail Blazers Friday night.

Life as an NBA player is something many dream about, and Rasmussen's legacy as a pro began in 1985 when he was drafted in the first round of the NBA draft by the Denver Nuggets. Rasmussen played six years at Denver and was traded during the off-season to the Hawks.

The move took some adjusting with the new team, but Rasmussen recently earned the starting role at center, where he seems to play everywhere on the court except under the basket.

"It took them a while to get used to me," Rasmussen said. "This year I'm more outside."

No kidding. Rasmussen scored 15 points Friday on seven of 12 shooting, but every one of his baskets came from the outside, including a three-pointer that was one of a team-record 10 three-pointers of the night for Atlanta.

A 7-footer shooting treys? "That's all he does is go outside," said Blair center Kevin Duckworth, who had to follow and guard Rasmussen around the perimeter. "That's all he does, and he does it very well."

Portland forward Jerome Kersey agreed with his teammate.

"Rasmussen is just sittin' up there waitin' for that jumper," Kersey laughed.

It's easy to laugh off the sight of someone the size of Rasmussen working the outside like he was a guard, but if that big man can shoot well, it causes more problems than one might first

think. With Rasmussen roving the court outside the paint, the man guarding Rasmussen — be it Duckworth, Cliff Robinson or Alaa Abdalnaby — is forced to play along and go outside too. This leaves a lane open to the basket and most likely takes out one of the opponent's top rebounders.

Which is where Kevin Willis steps in. The 7-foot Atlanta forward is second in the NBA in rebounding — grabbing 20 or more rebounds in 11 different games this season, and much of Willis' success on the boards can be attributed to Rasmussen keeping one of the opponent's big men from the basket, Willis said.

"There's no question about it," said Willis, who proved his own point with 17 rebounds and 27 points Friday. "It's good because he's such a good shooter with a big body. He opens things up inside."

A more open inside has also helped NBA superstar Dominique Wilkins this season. The Hawks' other starting forward is the NBA's second-leading scorer at 28 points a game.

Rasmussen himself couldn't be happier shooting from the outside, an area he rarely visited at Oregon, where he was instead counted on for blocked shots and high-percentage shooting. Rasmussen was a career 52-percent shooter at Oregon and holds the school record for career-blocked shots.

Much the same was expected of Rasmussen during his six seasons as a Denver Nugget, but he prefers the offense the Hawks run with him, he said.

"It was a nice change," said Rasmussen, who averages eight points and had a season-high of 18 against Denver earlier this month. "I'm getting a good number of shots now."

Atlanta likely has a good shot at the NBA playoffs this season, the postseason tournament that Rasmussen took part in five of his six seasons at Denver. Not bad for a man who admitted he wasn't even sure he would be able to compete at the collegiate level.

"I never knew if I'd make it in college basketball," Rasmussen said. "People have talked me down my entire career."

Those same people may have trouble talking down to a 7-foot professional basketball player now, though.

*Jake Berg is sports editor of the Emerald.*



Atlanta's Blair Rasmussen, a former Oregon star, battles with Portland's Buck Williams for a rebound.

Photo by Sean Poston

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**RIM RESULTS**

**Basketball**  
**Tuesday, Jan. 21**  
*Score/League*  
Non-Commitments d. Rando 55-27/W  
Skywalkers d. Kappa Alpha Theta 30-26/W  
Kappa Sigma 3B d. Lambda Chi Alpha '3' — forfeit/M3  
Underdogs d. Have-Nots 39-31/M3  
The Tajik's d. Fear of Five 40-36/M3  
Puli My Finger d. Chumps 26-22/M3  
Jake is Elvis d. Phi Psi C 70-23/M3  
Dymen d. Rando-C — forfeit/Coed  
Delta Gamma/Kap Sig d. Waldominators 85-43/Coed  
Spurmoni Bellbottoms d. Muskrats 71-59/Coed

**Wednesday, Jan. 22**  
Riley Meatmen d. The Cowp 54-29/MD  
Sensitive Artists d. Twin Towers 2-0/MD  
Theta Chi '3' d. Theta Chi '4' 52-33/M2  
VSA d. Arch Enemics 45-34/M2  
Chase Us d. Delta Upsilon '2' 38-20/M2  
Delta Upsilon Reign d. Diska 59-34/M2

**Thursday, Jan. 23**  
Run & Shoot d. Thundering Express 79-49/M1  
PKP '1' d. Yapple Dapple 62-56/M1  
ATO '1' d. Kut & Phil 60-20/M1  
SAE d. Theta Chi '3' 41-36/M1  
Sigma Chi '2' d. 66-31/M2  
Sigma Chi '1' d. Kappa Sigma '2b 68-44/M2  
ATO '2A' d. Taters 44-37/M2  
Sigma Chi '3' d. ATO '2B' 48-28/M2  
Penetrators d. Victoria's Secret 57-35/M3  
TKE-Party Fools d. Criminal Apathy 49-36/M3  
Silent Warriors d. Wookie Jam 49-26/MD  
Well Dunn d. Team Dougie 51-49/MD

**Saturday, Jan. 25**  
Second to None d. Phi B 68-50/M2  
No Hops d. Delta 69-37/M2  
Beta '3' d. Da Busk 63-36/M2  
Sigma Nu d. Phi C 54-23/M2  
Dos Dedos d. Pike '2' 50-47/M2  
Earth, Wind & Fire d. Nepal for Breakfast 81-35/M2

**Weasel's World** **Kraig Norris**

Panel 1: A character says "ARGH!" and another asks "WHAT'S WRONG?"

Panel 2: The character says "I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY LOST! I HAD MONEY ON 'EM!!"

Panel 3: The character asks "YOU BET ON THE SUPER BOWL?" and the other replies "NO, THE BUD BOWL!"

Panel 4: The character says "I TELL YA, IT'S FIXED!" and the other replies "YOU DON'T SUPPOSE..."