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DATE: Wednesday, November 3, 1993 TIME: 12:00 - 1:00 pm **PLACE:** EMU Building

"I recently attended a seminar at the University of Oregon by Retirement Planning Group. The purpose of my attendance was to receive additional information regarding my P.E.R.S. options. The valuable information that I received and the level of professionalism that was displayed, made this a very enjoyable seminar." Mr. Gus Pusateri, Business Manager, Computer Center

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## — Oregon Daily Emerald Sports —

# LA to Oregon move nice change for guard

few nights ago. Kenya Wilkins decided to go for a walk. At night. By himself.

No big deal to many. After all, this is only Eugene. But for Wilkins, a freshman on the Oregon men's basketball team, it was not only a big deal. It was a refreshing one.

'It may sound weird," Wilkins said, "but I took a walk one night, and it was different. It's nice to walk at night and feel safe.

Wilkins came to Oregon from a rough and dangerous neighborhood 15 miles north of Inglewood in Los Angeles: an area infested with negative influences from gangs, drugs and violence.



In fact, he experienced the gang life firsthand from his older brother, Raymond, who is a member of a gang. But Wilkins said that by hanging out with the "jocks," and with a little intimidation from his brother, joining a gang was never really an option.

"The gang-bangers hung out together and the jocks hung out together," he said. "My brother never wanted me to be in a gang. Even if I wanted to be in one, he

wouldn't let me. Because my brother was in a gang, I knew a lot of the guys and my brother protected me while I was growing up. When I was young, I used to say that if anyone killed my brother, I'd get 'em, but now I realize that's pretty stupid."

Wilkins said he was safe within his own neighborhood, but if he journeyed two blocks away from his house, "I could get in some trou-

Instead of experiencing the gang life, Wilkins worked on becoming one of the most talented players in the Los Angeles area during his time at Dorsey High School. As a senior, the 5-foot-10 point guard averaged 17 points and five assists a game while playing for one of the top high schools in the city

When it came time for him to make a decision on where he would continue his basketball career, one of his priorities in making the choice was to go somewhere where fear and watching his back would take a backseat to just playing basketball.

Eventually, Wilkins said, he realized Eugene was where he want-

"It was like a family away from a family here," Wilkins said. "I hadn't done a lot of traveling, so I wanted to go somewhere I would feel comfortable. It was important to my mom and I that I went somewhere where I'd be safe. Coach (Bobby) Braswell and coach (Jerry) Green convinced us that I'd be safe here.

Braswell, Oregon's top assistant coach, coached high school basketball in Los Angeles and realizes that it's important to players like Wilkins to be in a safe environment, and although he is aware of that fact, he tries not to make it a big issue in the recruiting process.

"I've always taken the stance that you don't realize the situation players in the inner-city are in unless you're living there," Braswell said. "I try not to make (safety) a big issue in recruiting, but I know that's a big interest of some players. Many players from Los Angeles stay there and go to USC or UCLA, but it is attractive to some to go to a good school with a safe environment."

As one of six new faces for Oregon this season, Wilkins has been the most talked about. Last year, the Ducks' glaring weak spot was at the point guard position, so when recruiting time came along, the Oregon coaches put finding a quality point guard on the top of

Although head coach Jerry Green hasn't committed to a starting lineup this early into practices, it looks as if Wilkins could be the starting point guard for the Ducks this season, which seems just fine with his teammates, who are already comparing him to another former Oregon point guard.

I see a lot of Terrell Brandon in Kenya," Oregon junior guard Orlando Williams said. "During pick-up games, he's shown that he's a great passer and very quick. I see him getting a lot of playing time in this

Wilkins, however, is not so much worried about starting or not, but rather turning around the Oregon basketball program.

Wilkins just wants a chance to take the court at McArthur Court: a place he's heard can get pretty wild. "I hear this place gets loud and shakin'," he said. "To me, that's

what college basketball is all about. And being able to safely walk from his room in the University

Inn to The Pit by himself is an added incentive.

Dave Charbonneau is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

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