

Green, assistants building team

By Dave Charbonneau
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When Oregon fans got their first glimpse of the 1993-94 men's basketball team Monday night at "Late Night With Jerry Green", some of them may have walked back outside McArthur Court and made sure they were in the right arena.

With six new players, this was not the same team that went 10-20 last season.

It is indeed a different team. It's becoming Jerry Green's team.

As the second-year head coach of the Ducks, Green is a big step closer to turning the Oregon program into his own.

Last year, he was forced to try and make something out of a team he inherited that went 6-21 the previous season.

Somehow, he milked 10 wins out of them. Then, although Green insists he only told one of the players to leave, some of the players decided to hit the road, opening up eight scholarships.

He used seven of them this year, signing three freshmen, three junior college transfers, and a sophomore transfer. He signed point guards, shooting guards, forwards and a center. The Ducks have also received a verbal commitment from another 6-11 center for next season.

The players could be the ones that start to turn the program around, or they could be a bunch of stiff, but at least they'll be Green's players. But not necessarily.

With Green at the helm, the assistant coaches have just as much power as Green does.

"The assistants sometimes tell me what to do when recruiting a player," Green said. "If they want me to call a recruit, I'll do that. If they want me to write him every day, I'll do that."

When Green took the job at Oregon a year and a half ago, he wasted no time getting assistants that would help him get the players he wanted.

Bobby Braswell, who coached at Long Beach State and was a high school coach in Los Angeles, was Green's first choice as assistant.

Braswell's contacts along the West Coast were appealing to Green, especially his contacts within talent-rich Los Angeles.

"Bobby Braswell was an excellent man for us to hire because he knows the West Coast," Green said. "He knows Los Angeles and there are a lot of good players and people in that area who have a great deal of respect for coach Braswell."

Braswell made Oregon's first recruiting coup when he convinced a talented Los Angeles area point guard, Kenya Wilkins, to come play for the Ducks, a team desperately needing someone to run

the offense.

"Coach Braswell recruited Kenya Wilkins," Green said. "I called him a few times, but he's here primarily because of the work coach Braswell did."

Braswell said the recruiting of Wilkins was an example of how much leeway the assistant coaches are given in Green's system.

'Coach Green gives us the freedom to go out and find players we think will help the team.'

—Bobby Braswell
Oregon assistant coach

"I enjoy it here because it's very different from my previous job," he said. "Coach Green gives us the freedom to go out and find players we think will help the team. Then we all sit down and talk about it."

Green, a former assistant under Roy Williams at Kansas, said it's important to give the assistants proper credit for the recruitment of players.

"When I was an assistant, we got blamed for everything that went wrong," Green said. "I always felt like there was no way for me to get proper recognition for anything except for the things that went wrong."

Green now gives his assistants credit when they do deserve it by saying in press releases which coach played the biggest role in recruiting a player.

"By doing that," Green said, "it makes them more enthusiastic about their job, and that can only help this program."

Although the importance of contacts plays a big role in recruiting players, so does recognizable names. Green's other two assistants last season were Mark Turgeon, a former player at Kansas, and King Rice, who played for North Carolina's 1991 Final Four team.

Rice has since left the program, accepting a job elsewhere, but he's been replaced by Ronny Thompson, whose ties to basketball are undeniable. He's the son of Georgetown basketball coach John Thompson.

Oregon's assistants can rest for a while, but starting this summer, the rat-race will start again because the Ducks will have eight scholarships available for the 1995-96 season, and the best players of the class of '95 will sign in November of '94.

BLAZERS

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ter Chris Dudley.

The NBA challenged the one-year escape clause in Dudley's contract all the way to U.S. District Court before finally surrendering.

The mention of trading veterans, plus Drexler's preseason contract squabble, left Williams wondering whether management still appreciates those who brought the team so much success.

"I don't know where the other players stand, but I just don't feel too attached at this point," Williams said this week. "I'll go out and play as hard as I can and hopefully, at a given point in the season, things will turn around and I can feel that same family feeling I felt the first three years."

Adelman said Williams, who has been the heart of the Blazers' defense and is entering his 13th NBA season, remains the team's starting power forward as it heads into its season opener Friday against the Clippers in Los Angeles.

"We have to have Buck Williams on this team," Adelman said. "Hopefully we've added some guys who are going to take some pressure off him over the course of a long season, but when it comes down to it, he's one of the guys you have to have on the floor."

The departure of Duckworth and the arrival of Dudley, whose strengths are defense and rebounding, has the Blazers hoping to run more this season.

"I think it's going to be more exciting," said Cliff Robinson, who won last year's NBA Sixth Man award for his play off the bench at all three front-line positions. "We'll be able to get up and down the floor more and really defend, and get back to the type of things that we've done in the past."

Moving the ball and playing defense are important ele-

ments to any Portland improvement this season.

"We have to play to our strengths. That's really crucial," Adelman said. "If we come out and don't play to our strengths, we're going to struggle. We are not a good shooting team, for instance, so if we don't move people and move the ball, we're going to have a hard time getting good opportunities."

"We can be a good shooting team at times, but it's not something that's going to be there night after night for us. The defensive end, the ball movement and the player movement, that has to be there night after night."

Dudley's acknowledged weakness is on offense. In seven preseason games, he shot 28 percent from the field and 58 percent from the free throw line.

Grant was obtained for his shooting ability, but he also struggled in the preseason. He made just 42 percent of his shots and 40 percent of his free throws.

"Harvey is really trying to find himself," Adelman said. "Because of that, he hasn't shot the ball very well, but I think that will come."

Kersey, who came to camp with an improved outside shot, feels he came out on top in an intense battle with Grant and Robinson for the starting small forward position.

"I feel as though I haven't lost it," Kersey said. "I fully expect to be out there and I'm going to work hard to be in that lineup."

For the seventh straight year, Drexler and Terry Porter will be Portland's starting guards. Rod Strickland, who spent much of the summer working on his outside shot and was perhaps the most consistent Blazer in the exhibition season, will come off the bench in a three-guard rotation.

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