



JEFF PASLAY/Emerald



MICHAEL SHINDLER/for the Emerald



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Orlando Williams has waited patiently for this season.

Since he left Portland's Benson High School in 1990, where he earned Oregon Prep Player of the Year honors and led his team to the 4A state championship, Williams has sat through a gruelling redshirt season, played for one of the worst teams in Oregon basketball history and had to adjust to a new coach with a new style and philosophy.

But on the evening of Nov. 1, Williams got the vote of confidence and appreciation he needed.

That night the Oregon basketball program had "Late Night With Jerry Green," which was designed to showcase the 1993-94 men's basketball team.

During introductions, each player walked out under the glare of a spotlight and received a hefty welcome from the 4,000 or so fans in attendance. But when Williams was introduced, it was different.

When Williams' name was called, the crowd erupted into a deep hum of "Oooooooo." The spotlight on Williams was no brighter, but the response of the crowd made it obvious that the 6-foot junior guard is the player Oregon fans are counting on to bring this team of new, largely unrecognizable faces together and make them at least competitive when the Ducks open the season Tuesday against Bamburg Club at McArthur Court.

"I know the fans are expecting a lot of me this season, and that's a lot of pressure," Williams said. "But I definitely feel more comfortable being the player people are looking for to step up. I really feel like I can't let the fans down this season."

For the past three years, Williams has watched Antoine Stoudamire (1991-93) and Terrell Brandon (1990-91) earn the title as the "go-to guy" for Oregon. Now, Williams is hoping that he, too, can become as dependable as his predecessors.

Green said that even with all the new talent, there's no question Williams is going to be an important piece in the puzzle.

"He's going to be relied on heavily this year," he said. "Especially with his long-range shooting abilities."

OVERANXIOUS

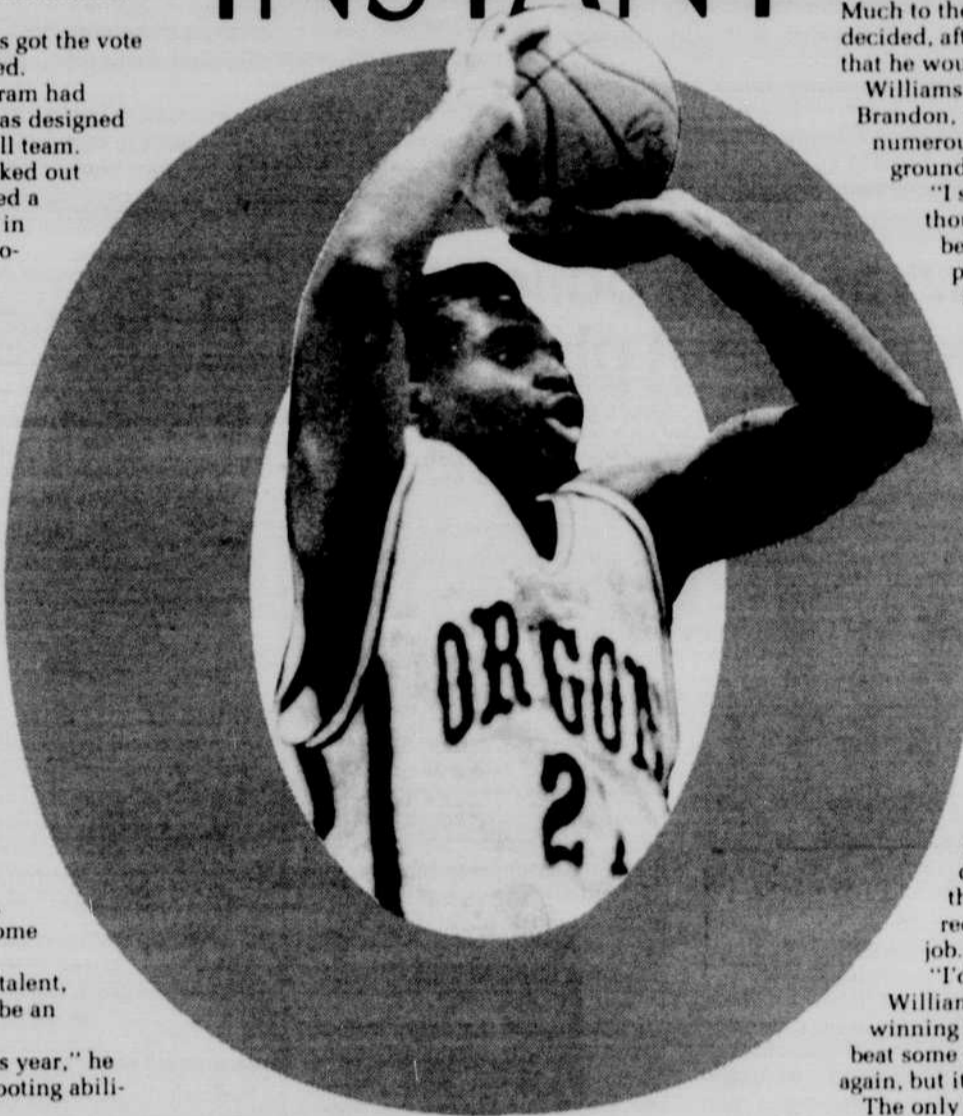
Williams is so ready to jump into the role as the money man for the Ducks that he said he may be overdoing it a bit. He wants to prove his three-point shot is better than ever. He wants to prove he's better at handling the ball, and he wants to prove he can be a leader. But his anxiousness on the court, by his own admission, sometimes hurts Oregon's game plan. In fact, there's still doubt in his mind about whether he'll even be starting once the season starts.

"The coaches have jumped on me a lot in practice because I've been trying to do too much," Williams said. "Right now, I'm not even on the (starting) team in practice. I have to tone things down in practice because I shoot a lot in practice and I've been trying to do a lot of one-on-one stuff, and I don't think the coaches like that too much."

With six new players still trying to learn Green's crash course on his complicated style of basketball, there's no time for ill-advised shots and hot dogging. Green and his coaching staff have let Williams know that the important things at this stage in the season is passing and cutting to the hoop, not dunking and bombing from 25.

STORY BY DAVE CHARBONNEAU

INSTANT



"Coach Green has told me he's not going to play me if I go outside the offense," Williams said. "But I think he's right. The important thing right now is for the new guys to learn the system. I need to tone it down right now, and once the season gets going and the shots start falling, everything will work out fine."

Williams shot 41 percent and was fourth in the Pacific-10 Conference in three-point shooting last season. Green said it's important for the coaches to make sure Williams plays smart basketball without demonstrating a lack of confidence in his obvious shooting abilities.

"We treat shooting very delicately," Green said. "You have to be careful about getting on a player too much for taking the outside shot. I never want Orlando to doubt the fact that he can take any shot he wants as long as he's open. However, we won't be successful if he's shooting the ball over defenders who are right in his face."

Green said the coaches also make sure to get on Williams when he passes up a wide-open shot.

THE ROUGH YEARS

Williams averaged 26 points a game during his

senior year at Benson, and was named to the *Best in the West* prep all-star listing. At the time, Loyola-Marymount was a national power with its run-and-gun, 100 point-averaging style of play.

Loyola recruited Williams hard, and Williams liked the thought of playing the same style of offense he had prospered in while at Benson. He was close to signing, but held off until he had a chance to visit Oregon. Much to the dismay of Williams' buddies, Williams decided, after talking to fellow Portlander Brandon, that he would go to Oregon.

Williams liked the thought of being able to play with Brandon, whom he had played against and with numerous times in high school and on the playground.

"I saw what Terrell was accomplishing here, I thought it was something I wouldn't mind being a part of," Williams said. "I could just picture Terrell penetrating and then kicking it back out to me."

But that vision never got farther than the playground.

Williams' first season (Brandon's junior year) for the Ducks was spent on the bench as a redshirt because then-coach Don Monson believed Oregon's other freshmen, Jordy Lyden and Clyde Jordan, were a little ahead of Williams talent-wise.

Again, Williams talked with Brandon, who also thought it was a good idea, and eventually decided to redshirt.

Williams now said the decision to redshirt was one of the best decisions he's made in his life, because it gave him an extra year with Green.

Prior to the following season, Brandon left the Ducks for the NBA. Brandon's decision, along with numerous injuries, sent Oregon's team spinning down the drain. In Williams' first season of play with the Ducks, Oregon finished with the worst record in school history and cost its coach a job.

"I'd never experienced that many losses ever," Williams said. "I was anxious to be playing and winning games. I had seen Terrell and those guys beat some good teams and was hoping to do that again, but it didn't happen. It was real depressing."

The only bright part of the season was that Williams got the chance to play a lot of minutes and develop a game that would work in the Pac-10. Stoudamire, another Portlander, was at times the only bright spot for the Ducks, but by the end of the season, Williams started to work his way into the spotlight.

In the Ducks' final game of the season, Williams knocked down 27 points against Cal in his best performance of the season.

"Antoine did a lot of the scoring that season," Williams said. "It took me a while to realize that he couldn't do all of the scoring. So as the season progressed, I tried to get involved a little more. By the end of the season, I wanted to go out on a note that would carry into the next season, and I ended up scoring 27 against Cal."

A NEW ERA

When Williams returned for his sophomore season, Green wasted no time in getting the team familiar with his system. Green wanted the Ducks to play fast-paced, high-scoring basketball. Ironically, it resembled the type of offense Loyola-Marymount was using when it went after Williams two years before.

Gone was Monson's make-them-beat-you-at-your-

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