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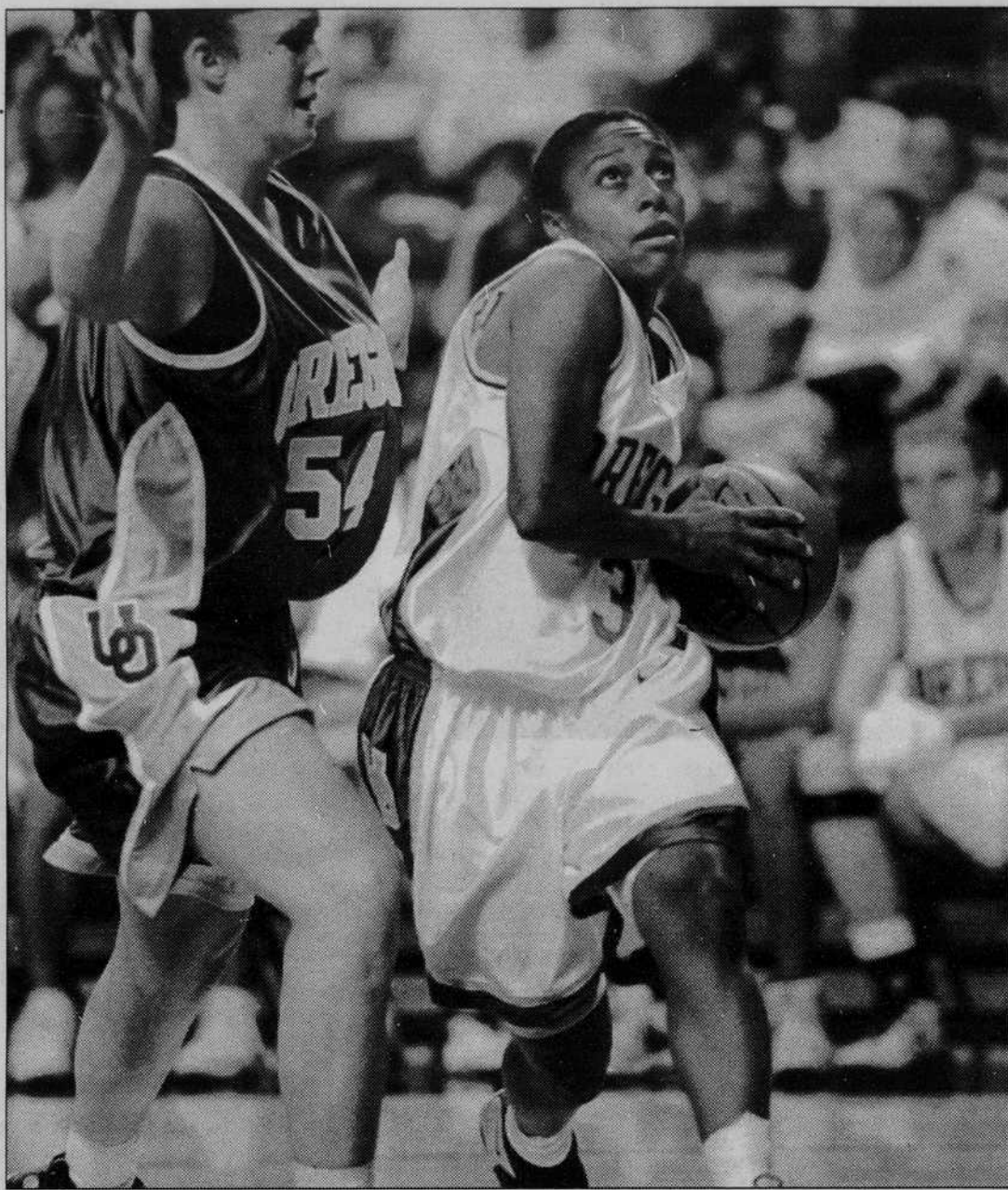
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Since arriving on the scene last season, Shaquala Williams has helped raise Oregon's game to a new level. Jeffrey Stockton Emerald

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Shaquala Williams, always flashy and very serious about winning, adds new flavor to the Oregon women's basketball program

By Mirjam Swanson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Shaq is a baller. Go watch her, if you haven't yet. You'll see. Shaquala Williams is bad.

Bad like one of those old school, cool jazz cats. The dudes who used to play impossibly crazy, intricate fast-paced tunes like it wasn't a thing. Like they weren't even really trying. Like they didn't even care.

Except that they did, of course. Artists so passionate and so obsessed with their craft that they continually raised the bar, pushed their form to unbelievable levels but still managed to look incredibly cool the whole damn time.

That's the type of accomplishment that doesn't just happen. That takes immense amounts of work, energy, commitment, love.

"I allow basketball to consume me," Williams said. "From the day I started playing when I was really little ... just watching it, talking about it. I'm one of those people who can sit and talk about basketball for hours and never get sick of it. That's my love affair with it."

And it's perfectly evident. To fans and teammates alike.

"Her whole life, her whole mentality, is basketball," junior guard Lindsey Dion said. "She's got a huge career after she leaves Oregon. No doubt, she'll be a superstar.

And for good reason. "The thing that people either knowingly or unknowingly like about her is her passion," Oregon head coach Jody Runge said.

"How hard she competes and that she has the courage to take big shots and make things happen. It's her passion and her courage that's really fun to watch — in addition to the fact that she has great skills to do spectacular things."

Already, this hyper-competitive, 19-year-old, All-American sophomore's accomplishments are spectacular. She's only the fourth freshman in the history of the Pacific-10 Conference to be named first team all-Pac-10. She

“ Her whole life, her whole mentality, is basketball... No doubt, she'll be a superstar. ”
Lindsey Dion
Oregon guard

was also the conference's freshman of the year. Her 10.2 points per contest led the Ducks in scoring. She played a major role in Oregon's winning the Pac-10 last year. This season she scored in double-figures in 10 straight games, before San Francisco held her to six points by draping defenders all over her in the Ducks' loss last Sunday.

Williams is indeed a star. She has the required skills, the brava-do, the unwillingness to lose. Qualities that come either naturally or not at all.

So it makes sense that it's Shaq's time that the media needed for every conference preview

this week. And that it's Shaq's player's diary posted on ESPN.com.

"I think everybody has a plan," Williams said. "I think God maps out a plan for everybody. Everybody's meant to do a certain thing. Michael Jordan was meant to be who he is. Chamique [Hold-sclaw], she's who she's supposed to be. Randy Moss is who he's supposed to be, and so I'm hoping that my map is the same way and that hopefully I can be the best at what I do."

Williams' map, of course, hasn't been without obstacles.

Her tumultuous high school basketball history is well-documented — "I played against her at least once at all three schools that she went to," chuckled junior forward Brianne Meharry, formerly a star at Oregon City.

Her initial displeasure at coming off the bench last season even got some national attention.

"I don't want this to sound wrong," Williams said. "But I feel like I'm too cool to be sitting on the bench. Know what I'm sayin'?"

Well, she's right.

Because she's in her element on the court, competing, performing and, of course, winning. And meanwhile, stirring up change. Raising the bar, and pushing matters ahead in the Oregon program.

"No. 1, I'm black," Williams said. "No. 2 I have a different type of game. Everyone else here is structured. Bounce pass. Chest pass. With me it's not like that. If