

Lindquist

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pointers, which he says takes him about 160 shots. Then he schedules an appointment with one of his assistant coaches to meet him in the morning to do the exact same thing.

Why such hard work? Well, when you're Ben Lindquist and a member of a Pac-10 team, there's no way you can take anything for granted.

"I used to always see these guys on T.V. wearing their Nike gear, and think, man, that's something I want to be a part of," said Lindquist, who is averaging close to 17 minutes per contest. "And now, look, it's finally here. The main thing for me is to keep working hard every day.

"Because there's always somebody out there who is working just as hard and wants to play just as much as me."

Not likely.

The St. George, Utah, native's work ethic is a main reason he has quickly established a niche in a program that he came into this fall as the less-touted of the four junior college transfers. The other three were forward Bryan Bracey, forward/center Julius Hicks and guard Anthony Norwood.

After a nine-point breakout performance off 3-of-4 shooting from three-point range on Dec. 11 against Cal-State Northridge, Lindquist was quickly thrust into a starting role that lasted seven games. During that span he scored 13 points in back-to-back games against Denver and Minnesota, the latter coming in the Portland Jam at the Rose Garden.

"He was a mild surprise when we threw him out there in the starting role," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said. "You always see someone in their own environment and wonder how they'll respond in a much more intense one. He has just come right in and become a part of our family, and that's a big reason we're having so much success."

Sophomore guard Freddie Jones, who has since resumed the starting role that Lindquist had, is grateful to have a competitor such as Lindquist on the team.

"He came out and gave us a lot of energy when he was starting," Jones said. "[He] pushed the momentum just as he pushes me every day in practice, he has proved that he belongs at this level. A lot of people think that just because we play the same position that we would be fighting between one another, but it's not like that at all.

"We're all about winning and

we support each other the best that we can."

Winning is nothing new to Lindquist, who played at one of the premier junior colleges in the country at Utah Valley State. His team was ranked as high as No. 11, and every player on that team went on to play at a Division I school. Lindquist, who spent his seventh and eighth grade years in Newport, dreamed about someday playing for Oregon.

"I always knew I could play, but coming from a small town I was worried I never would," Lindquist said. "When Coach Kent approached me this past summer, I told him that whatever the situation was, I wanted to be a part of it. And if that meant cheering somebody else on, that was OK, as long as we were winning."

Kent loved that type of attitude and found a place for him on the roster.

"Ben has done a really good job in a number of areas," Kent said. "Number one, he's allowed us to coach and teach and he's responded. Number two, he fits in really well."

When talking about the toughness of the Ducks (10-2 overall, 1-0 Pac-10), Kent often refers back to the 82-75 win against previously unbeaten Minnesota as a turning point in the season, when the team proved that it can play with anybody.

Not only did Lindquist start that game and play 27 minutes in front of a national television audience, but his 13 points, four assists and two steals warranted him MVP honors for the game. He was honored with a plaque at mid-court afterward.

"That was a real surprise to me and I still don't know what to really think about that," Lindquist said. "I tried to downplay the award. The game itself was a lot of fun, and that was the game that I finally started relaxing and feeling comfortable."

But by no means do games such as those make Lindquist complacent. He is entering his first Pac-10 season with great anticipation and seems to be willing to do whatever it takes to help his team win. Whether that be grabbing a key rebound, diving into the stands for a loose ball or knocking down a clutch three.

"I'm really excited for this weekend," Lindquist said. "This is what it's all about. This is the opportunity I've waited for and I don't want to be sitting here two months from now wishing I had done this or that."

As his admirable practice habits clearly indicate, odds are that he'll come away pleased.

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