

# Kent teaches Chemistry 101 at Mac Court



## TWO MINUTES FOR CROSS-CHECKING

PETER HOCKADAY

It's the men's basketball media day, but the players could care less about the media.

There they sit, in the middle of McArthur Court, with the Eugene sports media hovering like flies around them. Someone cracks a joke, and the rest of the players laugh. This is the first time they've been together in their new uniforms on Mac Court — but you'd

think they were fraternity brothers, getting together to shoot the breeze about basketball and girls.

Believe it or not, this is how head coach Ernie Kent is going to get his team to win basketball games.

On the surface of things, it looks like Oregon could be shoved back to the middle of the Pacific-10 Conference this year, after tasting the top just a year ago. The Ducks lost three key players: Point guard Darius Wright, who ran the show even if he didn't put up the best numbers on the team; A.D. Smith, the workhorse and fan favorite; and Alex Scales, the flashy go-to guy.

At the same time, the rest of the Pac-10 is only getting older and wiser. The freshmen — Stanford's Casey Jacobsen, UCLA's Jason Kapono and

Arizona's Jason Gardner — are sophomores now. The leaders — Southern California's Brian Scalabrine, Arizona's Loren Woods and California's Sean Lampley — are ready to step into their roles even more this season. Stanford lost their star center, Mark Madsen, to graduation. Big deal. Try losing your starting power forward, your point guard and your leading scorer.

So how will Kent deal with the loss?

Junior guard Anthony Norwood can answer that question.

"We've got a lot of good people," Norwood said. "If you get good people with great character, it'll come onto the court also, and I think that's what we've done. I think it's going to be a big year for all of us. A lot of people are just sleeping on the Ducks [and] what they've lost."

"It's just a matter of all of us stepping up."

Norwood is one of a host of players that will play more minutes now that Scales, Smith and Wright are gone. Senior forward Bryan Bracey, junior guard Freddie Jones, senior center Flo Hartenstein and senior guard David Jackson will all try to fill the gaps that the graduating class left behind.

But right now, it's not the "who"

Kent is worried about; it's the "when."

"I'm excited about where this basketball team will eventually end up when it comes together," Kent said. "This will be the best chemistry that I will have here at Oregon. It's going to enable us to come together a lot quicker."

The Duck players are taking a specific chemistry class with Kent as their professor making the demonstration for his students: Mixing up different chemicals to get the right combination.

"We had a recruit, and where most teams would take him out, show him the town, the players took him back to the gym," Kent said. "That's the type of chemistry that's brewing here."

Even the new recruits themselves can sense what's coming, and they love it.

"Everybody gets along, and we all hang out off the court," freshman guard Luke Jackson said. "If you get along off the court, it's going to be easier for you to put trust in the other players. Everyone's working toward the same goal."

So, Oregon's chemistry is becoming a little clearer. Kent has somehow assembled a team that needed to incorporate its newcomers as soon as

possible, and has already done that. He has assembled a team that will be overlooked, and will play from behind, respect-wise, all season. He has assembled a team that will need to lean on each other in order to win, and they are already leaning.

But for all their talk about chemistry and coming together, the Ducks seem to think they need a leader, and everyone wants to vote himself into the position.

"I just happen to be the guy leading this team," Kent said.

"I'm going to step it up," Norwood said. "I'm going to lead by example. Once every individual knows what they've got to do, it helps the team get that much better."

"I realize that to help the team out even more, I need to step up and play my game," Jones said.

"I'm working hard to be a leader," Bracey said. "I'm leading by example."

The fight to determine a leader for this team could be tougher than the fight for a Pac-10 Championship.

Will team chemistry be enough to lift Oregon to another top-three finish in the Pac-10? Only time, and a few beakers full of chemicals, will tell.

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## Women's

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Williams tore her anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee in a pickup game Sept. 16. Full rehabilitation could take anywhere from four to seven more months, according to team officials.

"This is probably the closest I've been to Mac Court in a few weeks," said Williams, who is being allowed to condition on an EFX machine.

Compounding the gap left by Williams is the loss of backup point guard Karen Piers, who returned to her home of Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada, to pursue academic interests.

Then, sophomore forward Courtney Moore left the team to tend to her mother, who has cancer, in Reno, Nev. While Moore wasn't an integral part of the offense last season, she was a promising freshman whose resume included 17 points in a comeback road win over Arizona. Guard Amanda Brown also left the team.

The most recent loss to the team could be only temporary — Lindsey Dion, a guard/forward who often takes on the role of emotional

leader, tore meniscus cartilage in her right knee while performing running drills at Autzen Stadium.

Dion should be back by the start of the season, but she could miss valuable preseason tune-ups.

"I don't know what the deal is, but I'll live, and it will be over," Dion said. "Hopefully it will be a quick month and I'll be back on the floor."

The Ducks' biggest area of concern is a lack of depth at both guard positions, especially if Dion is injured. Dion and guard Jamie Craighead split time at shooting guard last season, with guard Courtney Shreve or Piers occasionally filling in. But with Piers gone, Shreve at the point and Dion injured, Craighead could spend time at shooting guard and the point.

Yet Runge said her team should be fine if it can adjust.

"It's just college athletics and [losses] happen," Runge said. "You have to be prepared. That is where your depth really comes into play. Obviously, on our perimeter, we're a little short on depth."

Perhaps more than any other team in the conference, the Ducks' three senior post players — center Jenny Mowe, forward Brianne

Meharry and Wolvert — are capable of putting points on the scoreboard.

Oregon's ability to deliver the ball to its post players rests heavily on Shreve, the newly-appointed starting point guard. As a freshman, Shreve became the Ducks' preferred backup point guard down the stretch of last season.

Wolvert is confident that Shreve can set up the offense.

"She's going to grow a lot in the first preseason," Wolvert said. "She'll learn how to play a fast-paced game and run the offense a lot more efficiently. I think she'll definitely bloom before the Pac-10s come around."

Newly recruited Cathrine Kraayeveld, a 6-foot-3 forward, should ease the loss of Moore down low, Runge said.

"We're doing the same things we've always done," Runge said. "We're trying to do a better job defensively than we've ever done before and to be able to execute on offense and get the ball inside. If they try to take that away from us, [we'll] shoot it from the outside. We're capable of doing both of those things."

## Men's

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and will continue to practice throughout the month in preparation of its first exhibition game Nov. 6 at McArthur Court. Oregon's season opener is Nov. 17 against Mississippi Valley State at home.

The pessimist is quick to point out the obvious: That the Pacific-10 Conference is loaded with teams who have superior returning talent and that Oregon will be hard pressed to match up due to its inexperience.

But when these Ducks look up and down the Pac-10, they don't feel out of this league.

"I think we're going to surprise a lot of people," said 7-foot-2 junior center Chris Christoffersen, who, along with Flo Hartenstein and David Jackson, had knee surgery over the off-season. "I like it better that we're the underdog and the unknown factor. I think this is better because people won't be as prepared for us as they were last year."

Obviously, one of the main ingredients that needs to develop for the Ducks is a leader, and while Kent says he has some ideas of who that should be, he's going to let leader-

ship develop amongst the players.

The one player that will be looked heavily upon is junior guard Freddie Jones. Jones, who has shown flashes of brilliance over the past two years, reported to the team in terrific shape and wants to become the team's go-to guy.

While he has treated fans to many spectacular plays, he considers his first two seasons at Oregon "a waste."

"It seems like I've been out here just contributing here and there," said Jones, who scored 82 points in a summer league game. "I could have been doing a whole lot more. I have to be aggressive; that's what has held me back. I've passed up a lot of shots."

Another guy that Kent has his eye on is senior forward Bryan Bracey. Last year, Bracey only played about 15 minutes a game because Smith would play 30-35 minutes.

"Bryan Bracey is a very good basketball player and now it's [his] turn to step onto that floor and people are going to be impressed," Kent said.

There was a certain "newness" that was evident as players and coaches walked around Mac Court talking to reporters. First, there were new uniforms that the players were wearing that incorporate some of

the same design as the football team.

There's a new paint color on the outside of Mac Court as the ivy shrubs are gone. And there's Kent's new rounded haircut. Where did his traditional flat-top go?

"That's on the barber room floor," Kent said. "Didn't want to look like [Oregon State coach] Ritchie McKay."

Most notably, there's the four new freshmen that helped Oregon receive a number one ranking for its recruiting class. The group includes McDonald's All-American point guard Luke Ridnour, forward Luke Jackson, guard James Davis and center Jay Anderson.

"Luke, Luke and James are not your typical freshmen," Kent said. "They have a calm and confidence that most freshmen don't have. Jay may need more adjustment time, but he certainly has the ability to emerge also."

While there is an emphasis on the new, Kent expects last season's overtime loss to Seton Hall in the first round of the tournament to pay great dividends.

"Once they've experienced March Madness, it becomes easier to direct them back there," Kent said. "We've seen the prize up close."



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