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Oregon guards Ben Lindquist and Anthony Norwood (34) tip off their season tonight against the Basketball Travelers. Emerald

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A long journey starts tonight

■ The Oregon men's basketball team will get its season underway at McArthur Court in an exhibition game

By Peter Hockaday
 Oregon Daily Emerald

After eight long months, it's finally here.

The Oregon men's basketball team will tip off the 2000-01 season tonight in an exhibition game at McArthur Court against the Basketball Travelers.

The game, which starts at 7 p.m., will be the first chance for the Ducks to play a team that doesn't wear green and yellow.

"We just want to see where we are," senior forward Bryan Bracey said.

Bracey and the Ducks will use tonight's game, and next Tuesday's exhibition matchup with Athletes in Action, to work out their off-season kinks and find a rhythm against teams that should provide minor challenges.

"We're looking to win," said Bracey. "We're going to go out, play hard, and try to win by a lot."

Last season, the Ducks opened up the year with a 98-87 win over the Basketball Travelers before going on to their first 20-win season since 1945. Oregon's 98 points were the most they scored all season, and the Travelers' 87 points were the most they gave up all season.

But the players who could make the biggest impact tonight were thinking about college applications this time last year. They are the freshmen — Luke Ridnour, Luke Jackson and James Davis — who Oregon head coach Ernie Kent thinks can make a direct impact tonight.

"I'm pleased with the freshmen," Kent said after the team's scrimmage Thursday. "I thought they were outstanding."

Davis has a "great shot," according to Kent, while Ridnour is going to "want the ball in his hands to make plays."

"They're not playing like freshmen," said Bracey. "They're going to come in and help us right away."

The other question mark for the Ducks is leadership — on the basketball court, not off.

"Guys like Bracey will want the ball and will score," said Kent. "Freddie Jones is another guy who can step up and get things done."

"Off the court, it's totally taking care of itself," the coach remarked about the team's leadership. "On the floor, it will continue to develop as the games start."

Kent and the Ducks will be at the University Bookstore today to sign autographs and unveil the team's new uniforms before the opener tonight. Nike will also give away 1,000 "Bracketville" posters at the event, which starts at 11 p.m. Several players will be on hand to sign autographs.

Overall, the 2000 Oregon basketball team is a mystery, and the Basketball Travelers could help Kent and Duck fans solve the case tonight on Mac Court.

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