

Mowe has yet to show potential



OUT IN LEFT FIELD

ADAM JUDE

PORTLAND — In the first half of Saturday's 62-54 women's basketball victory, there was a 6-foot-5-inch hole in the middle of Portland's Rose Garden.

No, the Trailblazers' home floor was not literally missing a piece of wood carpeting, but the winning team that occupied the court was virtually without one of its most important components.

And finally, in the second half, that major void in the Ducks' lineup was filled when senior post Jenny Mowe tabbed her best game of the season and re-established herself as one of the most prolific inside players in the Pacific-10 Conference.

Mowe missed her only field-goal attempt in 11 minutes in the opening period, one that saw the No. 12 Ducks (4-0) commit 14 turnovers and score just 21 points.

But the final 20 minutes against Santa Clara proved how much size matters in basketball.

Knowing that the Broncos' center, 6-foot-3 Annie Garrison, could not stop a strong inside attack,

Oregon began to break a half-court trap and get the ball down low — finally.

While the reigning Pac-10 Player of the Year, Shaquana Williams, is sidelined for the season with a knee injury, the Ducks have to rely on their seniors to fill the offensive absence. Senior forward Angelina Wolvert has been the Ducks' most consistent scorer, leading the team with 15.7 points per game (including a team-high 18 against Santa Clara.)

But, finally, another Shaq-like presence was felt in the rosy Portland arena.

Overcoming foul troubles in the first half, Mowe came out of the locker room with fire in her eyes — torching the Broncos for 16 points on a perfect 7-for-7 performance, en route to being named the Papé Jam Player of the Game.

In fact, when taking into account her 11 rebounds (one short of a career-high), Saturday's game could be considered one of the best games of Mowe's career.

My point, finally, is that Oregon should expect this type of performance from its enormous center.

Both Wolvert and Mowe should be posting double-digit figures every night. That may seem like a lot to ask from two individuals who put the team ahead of them-

selves. But as individuals looking to win a third consecutive Pac-10 crown and looking for some WNBA attention, the senior posts must understand that they are the best assets on a young, yet talented, Oregon squad.

There aren't too many teams in the Pac-10 that can match up to a rotation that includes two starters taller than 6-foot-3. Logically, then, it seems that the simplest route to victory would be through the middle, a spot that Oregon neglects too much.

Mowe's effort is not what is being questioned here. She is, in fact, regarded by many as one of the hardest-working members of the team. But her aggressiveness game-in and game-out must be consistently solid, as it was in the second half of Saturday's contest.

Without hesitation, head coach Jody Runge's group is going to make its eighth-straight NCAA tournament appearance. If it hopes to get past the second round, however, it's going to need the unstoppable force down low.

And if she plays like she did in the second half against Santa Clara, there could be another Pac-10 Player of the Year from Eugene in 2001.

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