

# HOOPS

## PREVIEW

Oregon Daily Emerald

**Wild, wild West**  
The Pac-10 should be as competitive as ever — for both the men and women.  
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# MARCH TO MADNESS



■ After playing the role of the sixth man last season, Bryan Bracey has emerged as one of the team's main go-to guys

By Jeff Smith  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Their voices were quiet, barely audible. Their mood was understandably down.

After all, the seventh-seeded Oregon men's basketball team had just been upset by No. 10 Seton Hall, 72-71, in the first round of the coveted NCAA Tournament.

This was an Oregon team that had been brimming with confidence and was led by three talented seniors in Alex Scales, A.D. Smith and Darius Wright. The Ducks entered the "The Big Dance" with high hopes, but left with empty stomachs.

But, after the game, as most of the team spoke about their missed

opportunities, there was one noticeable exception. Out in the hallway, beside the somber Oregon locker room, stood 6-foot-7 forward Bryan Bracey.

Obviously, Bracey was frustrated about the loss, but he spoke clearly, with his voice filled with confidence. On this March day in Buffalo, N.Y., Bracey took the first step toward being a leader.

"I'm ready already for next year," said Bracey, who had 10 points in 21 minutes against Seton Hall. "This team has an opportunity to be even better next year."

*Even better than this year's team?*

The thought hardly entered people's minds when they considered that Oregon was losing 54 percent of its scoring and 37 percent of its rebounding with the loss of its seniors.

Bracey, however, knew something that the majority of the people didn't. He knew he could be

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■ Guards Kourtney Shreve and Alissa Edwards continue to grow through the season

By Scott Pesznecker  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Every once in awhile, something happens to a team that puts its true character to the test.

Such a thing happened to the Ducks at McArthur Court Sept. 16.

Oregon players and recruits were playing an informal pickup game when star point guard Shaquala Williams drove past her defender for the normally easy layup.

But as Williams planted her foot to jump, she tore the Anterior Cruciate Ligament in her left knee.

With the departure of backup point guard Karen Piers, it was decided that the starting point guard duty would be left to sophomore Kourtney Shreve. Shoot-

ing guard Jamie Craighead would shift to backup point guard, and point guard Alissa Edwards would play occasional minutes.

Suddenly, the Pac-10's most experienced starting lineup was being led by one of its most inexperienced corp of point guards.

But so far, so good.

"Our guards are playing incredibly right now," senior forward Angelina Wolvert said. "That really speaks a lot about how much they've grown since the beginning of the year."

Shreve couldn't believe her ears when she heard she would start back in September.

The young point guard from Albany knew that Williams was hurt bad, but she didn't know the extent of the injury — until she paid a visit to head coach Jody Runge the day after the pickup game.

"She came up to me and said, 'Are you panicked?'" Shreve said,

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