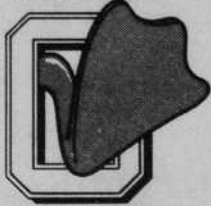


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## Bracey

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an impact player. He patiently sat on the bench for about 25 minutes a game in his first year at Oregon after transferring from Malcolm X Junior College in Chicago, Ill. He understood that Smith was the veteran and deserved his 30-35 minutes per game.

But with Smith gone, Bracey has showcased his variety of skills. His team-leading scoring average has gone up 12 points to 20.3 per game while his team-leading rebounding average has been upped by four to 7.5 per game.

In fact, Bracey's 28-point outing in Oregon's victory against Oregon State last Saturday was Bracey's seventh 20-point performance in the past 11 games. In that game he admitted that he was "just feeling it," as he scored 24 points in the second half to lead his team to victory.

"My teammates talked to me [at halftime] and said, 'We need you,'" Bracey said. "I knew that I had to help my team in order to win."

"Before the season, he said, 'Coach, you're going to see, I'm going to have some 30-point games,'" Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said of Bracey, who did record a career-high 31 points against Auburn on

Dec. 16. "When he goes to that level that he went to [against OSU], he just gives us an enormous amount of confidence."

During the summer, Bracey competed in Chicago in a league with many talented collegiate and NBA players. Bracey keeps it no secret that he wants to take his game to the pro level, and he is gaining believers every week.

"I think he has an excellent future at the next level," Oregon State head coach Ritchie McKay said after his team's loss. "He's a terrific player and a hard match-up because he's really a perimeter player. Bryan has so much confidence and is one of the best offensive players in the league."

While the future may indeed be bright for Bracey, his maturity and growth is evident in his team-first mentality of thinking. He now speaks words reserved for true team leaders.

"We gotta take it game-by-game and showcase ourselves," said Bracey, who can be seen on a 40-foot poster on the southwest corner of McArthur Court. "We're not a lost basketball team after losing those three great seniors last year. Everyone expected us to be at the bottom of the conference and our goal is to prove everyone wrong."

Thus far, his 10-1 Ducks are doing just that.

## Men's Preview

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record shows the Bears' weakness. The Golden Bears, unless they can win a few key games outside of Berkeley, might be headed back to the NIT in 2000-01.

### 7. Oregon State

Last year: 13-16 Head coach: Ritchie McKay (1st season) Player to watch: Deandra Tanner, G

The Beavers showed flashes of good basketball in their conference opener against Oregon, but flashes won't win games in the Pac-10. Oregon State's starters all average 25 minutes per game or more, while the top bench player averages just over six points per game. If Oregon State can get good bench play, and if the team's starters can stay out of fatigue and foul trouble, the Beavers could surprise a few of the Pac-10's elite teams.

### 8. Arizona State

Last year: 19-13 (NIT second round) Head coach: Rob Evans (3rd season) Player to watch: Awvee Storey, G/F

The Sun Devils made an impressive run to the NIT last season, but won't be so fortunate this year. Losing your all-time leading scorer — Eddie House, in ASU's case — won't help. Unless Arizona State can find some offense soon — it averages 75.1 points on the season — it won't be able to compete with anyone in the Pac-10 except Washington and Washington State.

### 9. Washington State

Last year: 6-22 Head coach: Paul Graham (2nd season) Player to watch: Mike Bush, G

The Cougars have been the Pac-10's worst team for three years, but their luck may change this season with a little help from in-state rivals Washington. WSU scored 59 and 57 points in their conference home openers against USC and UCLA last week. But it will probably be another long season for the men from Pullman.

### 10. Washington

Last year: 10-20 Head coach: Bob Bender (8th season) Player to watch: Thalo Green, F

The Huskies started the 2000-01 season 6-4, and looked mediocre at best. Then came losses to California-Irvine and San Diego by a combined 19 points, and Washington headed into the Pac-10 season downtrodden. The Huskies then lost to UCLA 86-64 and USC 87-61, making the trip to a successful season look even more bleak.

