



HER AIRNESS

■ After two years on the bench, junior forward Ndidi Unaka has become a solid role player for the Ducks

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

Everyone should be so lucky as to have a teammate like Jenny Mowe, especially, on this given week, if you're Ndidi Unaka.

"Want some dirt on Ndidi?" Mowe asks, interrupting an interview session with the junior forward. "She's scared of scary movies. She's one of those that screams. Not like 'Oh,' but 'AHHHHH!' high pitched, breaking-all-the-windows-in-my-house screams. And dogs, animals ... completely scared of them. There was a toy poodle in this guy's shirt, and she's walking down the stairs, she comes out, looks at it: 'AHHHH!' and climbs over five of us to get away from it."

"She's making all of this up," Unaka replies with a giggle.

"Her fastest 40 time when we were at Autzen Stadium," Mowe begins another story. "She's lined up, and over at like Ducks' Village or something this big dog starts barking, and we're like, 'Ndidi run, it's a DOG!' Fastest 40 time ever."

"She's lying."

"I am not, you know it's true."

"Whatever, Jenny. Pathological liar."

"Yeah, just a little dirt."

Think of that new Nike advertising campaign, the one with the repetitive, "Boing. Boing. Boing." Well, that's Unaka, bouncin' around the court, grabbing rebounds and blocking shots.

One can imagine Unaka's 6-foot, frail frame, composed of what seems to be 90-percent legs, jumping out of Mac Court. Her team-best 27-inch — 27! — vertical leap is enough to propel her outstretched arms six inches above the rim. She says she's never tried to dunk, though.

"Noooo, I can't," she said with a big grin. "I can touch the rim, but I can't dunk. I've actually never tried because I can't palm the ball."

Although her dunking abilities have yet to come along, Unaka does provide the Ducks with a solid set of fresh legs off the bench.

"I love it when she gets down, and then all of a sudden skies over everybody," Mowe said. "I

think she's come a long way since her freshman year."

In her first two years with the Oregon women's basketball team, Unaka took a total of 28 shots in 26 games, averaging five-and-a-half minutes per game.

This year, Unaka has been one of the main contributors off the bench, playing in 14 of the Ducks' 15 games, averaging nearly 12 minutes each game.

And the results are staggering. With almost twice the number of field goal attempts already this season compared to the last two years, Unaka is hitting .571 from the floor — third best on the team.

To top it all off, the junior forward from Harbor City, Calif., recorded career-highs in points (15) and minutes (25) against Washington State last weekend.

Regardless of what she's accomplished, Unaka remains humble and puts the team before personal merits.

"I think I played OK, but I would've rather had the win than the career high," Unaka said of the game against the Cougars, which the Ducks lost 67-64. "My minutes should increase, and hopefully I'll play well and we can win this time. I think everyone on the bench needs to step it up."

"She had an awesome opportunity on Saturday," senior forward Lindsey Dion said. "For those that got to see the game, I really thought they got to see what Ndidi is capable of."

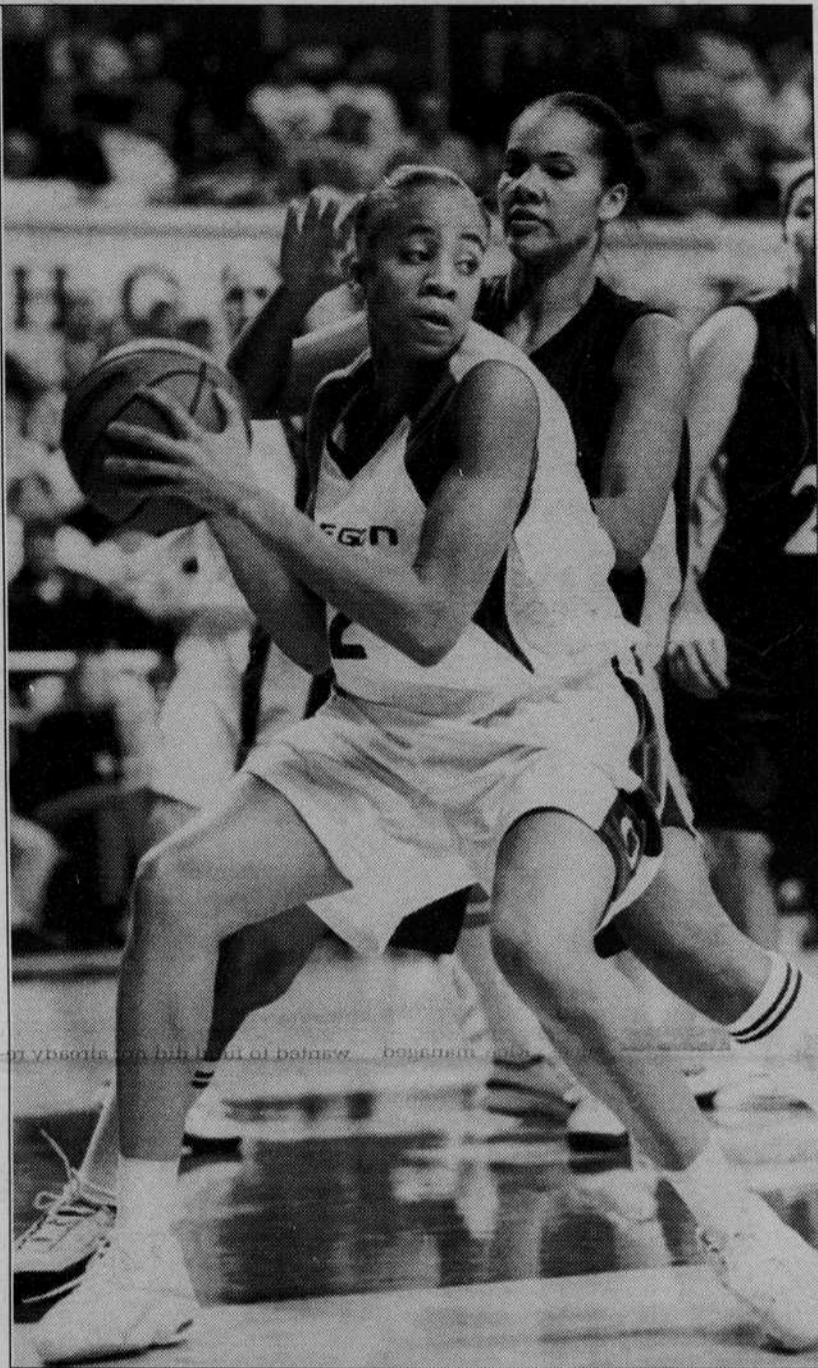
With starting forward Angelina Wolvert out for at least another week with a knee injury, Unaka will have advanced roles this weekend against her home schools, Southern California and UCLA.

"This is just a good chance for me to get some experience," Unaka said. "And when Ange comes back, if we happen to get in foul trouble or something, hopefully the coaches will feel more confident in putting me in there."

Overall this year, Unaka is averaging 5.6 points per game and 1.6 rebounds.

"I'm just so proud of Ndidi," head coach Jody Runge said. "She's worked so hard to have this opportunity presented to her and she took full advantage of it. Quite frankly, she and [senior Brienne Meharry] kept us in that game during the stretch run. I think she played with a lot of heart."

Turn to Unaka, page 10A



Adam Amato Emerald

Oregon junior forward Ndidi Unaka is the most athletic player on the Ducks' roster.

Ducks hope to overcome obstacles, Trojans

■ The men hope to get back in the Pac-10 race with a win against the talented Trojans

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

In a season full of pivotal contests, no two games might mean more to the Oregon men's basketball season than the two it will play in Los Angeles this weekend.

Should the Ducks beat Southern California and UCLA, they would be re-energized at 4-3 in the Pacific-10 Conference.

One loss to either team wouldn't devastate Oregon, but if the Ducks drop both, they would take a 2-5 league mark into a four-game homestand with the Arizona and Bay Area schools.

And you better believe the players (11-4 overall, 2-3 Pac-10) realize this.

"This is a really big weekend for us," Oregon junior guard Freddie Jones said. "For us to be where we want to be and where we feel we should be, we have to come out with some victories on the road."

First things first, and that's the No. 22 Trojans (13-4, 3-2) tonight at 7:30 p.m. at the L.A. Sports Arena.

Typically before a game, Oregon head

coach Ernie Kent will speak of one or two opposing players that the Ducks should try to key in on. At the end of Tuesday's practice, however, Kent spoke of the Trojans' entire starting unit.

"They've got four guys averaging in double figures," Kent said. "They've got so many weapons on the floor that it becomes more of a one-on-one battle at every position."

The top one-on-one duel will be between the Pac-10's two leading scorers in Oregon forward Bryan Bracey (19.3 points per game) and USC forward Sam Clancy (19.0).

"With Clancy, his mismatch is his power and shooting," Kent said. "Clancy is such a warrior. He's a very difficult matchup."

And then there's junior guard Brandon Granville.

"He's a really good shooter and does a good job controlling the game and then breaks it down when he has to," Kent said.

What problems do USC big men Brian Scalabrine and David Bluthenthal pose? "Their size and shooting," Kent said.

And last, but not least, is the return of high-flying senior guard Jeff Trepagnier, who is playing himself back into shape after missing 13 games this season because of a combination foot injury and an NCAA suspension.

"[With] Trepagnier, [it's] his athleticism,

Turn to Men's, page 9A

■ Forward Lindsey Dion will return to the Ducks lineup today against Southern Cal

By Scott Peszner
Oregon Daily Emerald

Under normal circumstances, the Oregon women's basketball team would probably be thinking about revenge heading into today's 7 p.m. McArthur Court matchup against Southern California.

After all, USC was the only Pacific-10 Conference squad to sweep the Ducks last season. In both games, Southern California won the battle of individual matchups. The Trojans nearly knocked Oregon out of the running for the Pac-10 title.

So, assuming everyday circumstances, it seems that a little revenge would be in order.

But the Ducks' situation isn't normal. Senior forward Angelina Wolvert, still the Ducks' leading scorer despite missing almost two full games, won't play this week due to the medial collateral ligament sprain sustained last Thursday against Washington.

Which means that one of Oregon's other forwards — either freshman Cathrine

Kraayeveld, junior Ndidi Unaka or junior Alyssa Fredrick — must step up in a reserve roll if the Ducks (11-4 overall, 4-1 Pac-10) are to topple the visiting Trojans (6-9, 1-4).

"I think they're more concerned about the adversity that we're facing, and taking on bigger roles individually than they are about who's coming up next," Oregon head coach Jody Runge said.

The Ducks' starting lineup will get a boost by the return of forward Lindsey Dion, who sprained her ankle minutes after Wolvert's injury against Washington. Dion didn't play in either of Oregon's losses to the Trojans last season due to injuries.

"They're a good basketball team, they're very athletic. I'll go in there and be aggressive and see if I can mix it up a little bit," Dion said. "Who knows if I would have made a difference last season. Hopefully I can make a difference this season, whether it's on defense or offense."

Southern Cal used its athleticism to beat the Ducks last season. Runge said she expects her team to face an equally athletic USC team today at The Pit.

"They're a tremendous challenge," Runge said. "Athletically, they are so dangerous, they can do so many things when they're on. We have to be conscientious to not let them get started from the three-point line and be able to stay in front of the dribble

Turn to Women's, page 9A

