

Hicks

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mononucleosis during the Pacific-10 Conference slate and didn't play many quality minutes for the rest of the season.

Take two: Hicks was impressive during the preseason in 2000-01, then slowed by an ankle injury early on during the Pac-10 schedule, and once again hasn't played as much he's capable of.

Still, the San Francisco native is dominating enough when he does play that he has made an impact on the Oregon record books.

Prior to his ankle injury before the Ducks' Jan. 25 matchup with Southern California, Hicks had 18 blocks in the previous 15 games. He ranks ninth all-time in blocked shots at Oregon, and his 32-block performance this season is the Ducks' sixth best ever.

Hicks proved he could play ball long before he came to Oregon. Playing with ex-Duck Darius Wright at West Valley J.C. in California, Hicks tasted as much glory as possible at the juco level.

Hicks was an all-star and selected for the all-state team among all California junior colleges. He led West Valley to a 54-12 record and a Northern California Championship in two seasons there. He averaged 14 points and seven rebounds a game to complement a .727 shooting percentage and a .644 free-throw percentage.

He was such a Juice machine on the court that Street and Smith named him a national juco All-American in 1999.

But it would take Hicks two more years at a Division I school to learn some of life's most important lessons.

"This whole experience has been great for me," said Hicks as he bounced a ball between his feet at one of his final practices in an Oregon uniform. "I've learned a lot about life by being away from home, having re-

Julius Hicks



Senior forward/center

6-8

San Francisco, Calif.

(St. Ignatius H.S., West Valley J.C.)

2000-01: Averages seven points, 4.3 rebounds per game despite being slowed by injuries.

1999-00: Played in 29 games. Shot 57 percent from field, second on the team.

Before Oregon: Street and Smith junior college All-American in second season at West Valley J.C. Led all California J.C. players with 73 percent field-goal percentage.

sponsibility and playing basketball."

Others have been touched by Hicks' humility as the senior has discovered it himself.

Ridnour tells a story about the most exciting moment of his young college career, when the Ducks were leading No. 7 Arizona late in the game at McArthur Court.

"When the game was coming down to the end, he said 'You need to get the ball,'" Ridnour said. "He just kept telling me, 'You need to go get the ball and take this over for us.' For someone on the court, a senior, to tell you that, makes you feel really good.

"He's always building you up, and making sure you know you can do it, and that people believe in you."

Perhaps Hicks will leave a legacy that goes beyond statistical boundaries. Maybe years down the road, when the player who was mentored by Ridnour is mentoring another player, Hicks' name will come up.

Kent acknowledges that Hicks has only added to the Oregon program in his time here.

"I know he would have wished he could have done more out here," said Kent, as he pointed to the basketball floor at Mac Court. "But he's been a very important key to our success the last couple of years just because of the leadership and intensity he's brought to practice every day."

Juice is one of four players who will leave Oregon after this season to con-

quer other areas besides basketball.

Years from now, Hicks said he will most remember the people associated with Oregon basketball.

"I'm going to take a lot out of it — a lot of friendships with the new guys, and also a lot of friendships with the older guys that are going to last after I get out of here," Hicks said. "I'm going to remember the people, the fans, Mac Court. I'm going to remember the Arizona State game, going to the tournament, stuff like that."

The future, although uncertain, looks bright for Juice.

As Hicks focused on the Ducks' Civil War matchup at Oregon State Saturday, his thoughts were, as always, with his team.

"We thought we had the talent to [make the NCAA Tournament]," Hicks said. "We still have a chance to redeem ourselves on Saturday."

"I just want to win. If we can just win and go out on a positive note, that'll be enough for me."

To some, a win at Oregon State Saturday would seem like a small consolation prize for an average career. But to Juice, and all the Ducks that have been lucky enough to play with him, it would represent the final chapter of a success story.

Because it's never been about Juice.

their intensity."

For first-year Beavers coach Ritchie McKay, this season has been "disappointing," as Oregon State has endured much adversity (injuries, suspensions, violations, etc.) and has played with a roster that has ranged from only six to nine players.

"We expected more from ourselves, but success can't be measured in the number of W's," McKay said. "I expect an incredibly hard-fought battle Saturday, and hope that we'll play with the same type of

urgency that we have been lately."

As for the Ducks, they know that one final win won't erase their many losses, but a Civil War victory would surely help raise their morale as they head into the off-season.

"It's going to leave a better taste in our mouths if we win," Ridnour said. "When I see people on the street they say, 'Go beat the Beavers.' It's a big deal, and we have to win for the town of Eugene."

Oregon's Freddie Jones added, "You never want a losing season."



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Men's

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point guard Deandra Tanner, who is averaging 11 points per game. Ridnour expects Tanner to bring his "A" game and is looking forward to the challenge.

"He's going to go at me," Ridnour said. "It's his last game, he's had a good career and I'm sure he wants to go out with a win — especially against Oregon. We have to match

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