



Senior forward Bryan Bracey capped off his Duck career with team MVP honors. He also was honored as the team's top rebounder. Adam Amato Emerald

Basketball dinner celebrates season

■ Several awards and a multitude of emotional speeches are given at the basketball banquet

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

Although the Oregon men's basketball team may have finished the 2000-01 season with a .500 record, the Ducks found plenty to laugh, cry and cheer about at the annual basketball banquet Monday night.

Senior Bryan Bracey was named the MVP of the team to finish the banquet, held at the Eugene Hilton. Bracey, Flo Hartenstein, David Jackson and Julius Hicks, all seniors, were honored for their contributions to Oregon basketball, along with senior managers Andy Whiteside and Nick Graham.

The John Warren Most Inspirational Player award went to Jackson, the Jesse Nash Most Improved Player was Chris Christoffersen, the Harry Ritchie Scholar-Athlete award went to Ben Lindquist, while Hartenstein, Bracey and freshman Luke Ridnour received team awards for best defender, rebounder and assist-man, respectively.

But the evening was about more than just handing out the hardware. A highlight video of the 2000-01 season as well as speeches by head coach Ernie Kent, athletic director Bill Moos, the seniors and the assistant coaches gave the evening the feel of a championship banquet, not merely a season-ending one.

Kent spoke of the quality of the people in the Oregon program, from the players to the ball-boys, and said the 2000-01 Ducks will be recognized years down the line for their contributions to the program.

But Kent also called on the community to support the team in his concluding speech.

"We have a warm, supportive group of fans here, and that can make us great," Kent said. "But that's what can make us mediocre as well. We need this community

to hold us accountable."

Kent said multiple times that the season "got away" from the Ducks last year, and that he hopes to contend for the Pacific-10 Conference title in the future.

There was certainly emphasis on the future of Oregon basketball Monday night. Kent and Moos both said they will hold next year's returnees — which include Pac-10 Freshman of the Year Ridnour, Christoffersen, Luke Jackson, Anthony Norwood and Freddie Jones — responsible for bringing the Ducks back to the NCAA Tournament.

Master of ceremonies and "Voice of the Ducks" Jerry Allen added a little humor to Kent's comments when he told the crowd he would shave his head if Oregon played in March Madness next year, and that the coaching staff would shave their heads if the Ducks made it to the Final Four.

Monday was also a time for the seniors to reflect on their Oregon careers. Jackson gave the most emotional speech, as he looked back on his injury-riddled career and said he was still "a better man" than when he came into the program. The co-captain, who transferred from Utah three years ago with high expectations, said he would "always be a Duck."

Hicks, Hartenstein and Bracey also gave farewell speeches, and each invoked the sense of family that surrounds the Oregon basketball program.

For Hicks and Bracey, it was also a time to thank the team with a more personal good-bye note: imitations of Kent and Hartenstein, respectively. Hicks had the crowd rolling with laughter after his imitation of Kent at a practice, but Bracey's follow-up performance of Hartenstein's thick accent sent the crowd into an uproar.

Despite the fact that Oregon missed the postseason this year and finished in the bottom half of the Pac-10 a year after ending up third, Monday night was a time for the Ducks to reflect on the highlights of their recently-concluded season instead of dwelling on the failures.

With the help of some good wine, good company and gourmet food, focusing on good times was not a problem.

Wheelchair Basketball

The Blazers are coming to campus and they're challenging you to a friendly game of basketball.

No, not the Portland Trailblazers of the National Basketball Association, the Portland Wheelblazers of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association.

As part of the University's Disabilities Awareness Week, the Wheelblazers will be at the Student Recreation Center — Court 5 — today from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. (with an hour-long dinner break at 5 p.m.), ready to take on students in a first-come, first-serve basis.

But there's a catch: Students must also play in wheelchairs, which are available at the event.

Nadia Hasan, an ASUO representative who organized the event, said playing wheelchair basketball is a good way for students to understand what people with disabilities live through every day.

"Instead of just listening to someone talk about what it's like to be disabled, students will get a chance to actually experience it," Hasan said. "And it's going to be a lot of fun. I think it will be the best part of the week."



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- Recommendations or proposals
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