

O'Neal will enjoy his three days off

By John Nadel
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Shaquille O'Neal says he's ready to go in the playoffs whenever the schedule calls for it. Give him a three-day break, though, and he's in heaven.

"For a guy like me, who takes a footballish beating, that's good," O'Neal said at the Los Angeles Lakers' practice facility in nearby El Segundo Monday — a day after they opened defense of their NBA title with a 106-93 victory over Portland. "It's kind of a luxury. Days like today, I'm usually pretty sore."

Since Game 2 in the first-round, best-of-five series won't be played until Thursday night, O'Neal said he planned on spending some time in the Los Angeles Athletic Club pool to soothe his aching body, and he might get a massage and some acupuncture treatment as well.

O'Neal reacted angrily following the game when informed of comments made by Blazers coach Mike Dunleavy, who contended the Lakers' big man gets a break from NBA officials regarding offensive fouls and three-second violations.

O'Neal was much calmer Monday, although he made it clear he believes Dunleavy's remarks, as well as those by Scottie Pippen, are ridiculous.

Pippen said if O'Neal is allowed to continue pushing the opposition around, nobody will beat the Lakers.

"I play good, hard, clean basketball," O'Neal said. "I try to go around you; I don't need to go through opponents all the time. I'm very skillful."

"I never shoot 7 for 21 — there's a lot of stuff (the officials) let go. They've got to foul me every time. You're not going to block my shot when my family's around. You've got to foul me to stop me."

Lakers forward Robert Horry said the Blazers' remarks were just a ploy.

"It's laughable. They've got to do something to get into his head because they know how he goes, we go," Horry said. "Shaq's not pushing anybody around, he's getting position. They do the same thing."

Lakers coach Phil Jackson said he believes O'Neal was fouled on about 15 of the shots he missed.

"Shaq's not going to miss shots from point-level if he's not getting fouled. I would think they got as much as they wanted in Game 1 (from the officials)," Jackson said. "They should have let it alone."

As far as three-second violations are concerned, O'Neal said: "The only time I run down the middle is on a fast break. The other times, I'm running across the lane, somebody's impeding my progress."

Jackson said the one time O'Neal was called for a three-second violation, "It was two seconds. I actually timed it."

"The rule is this: If a player camps out in the lane, it's a three-second violation," Jackson said. "That's what the rule is all about, when a player camps in the lane."

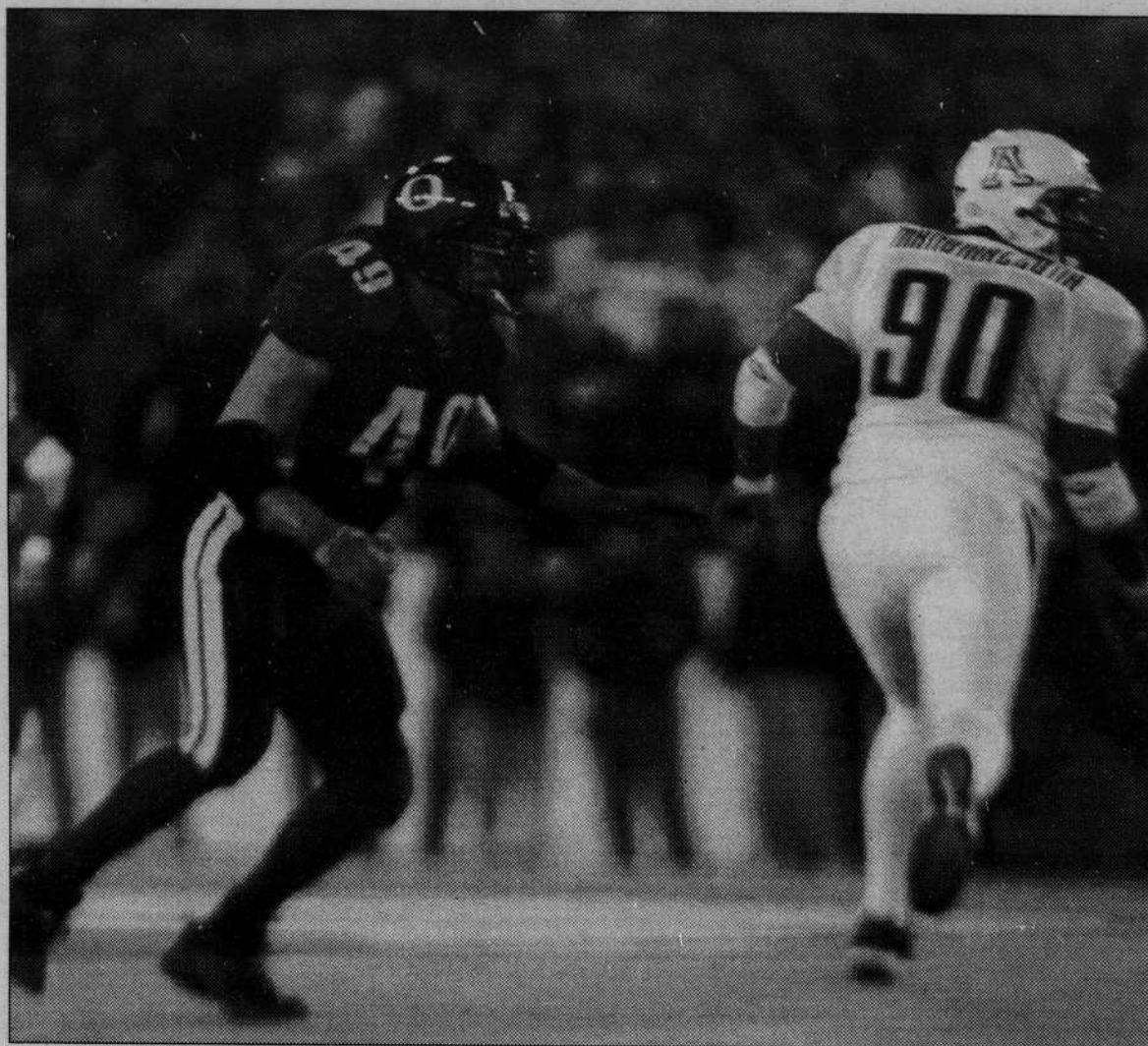
Jackson said a different officiating team might call a much different game.

"What you must do as a player is judge and assess what a referee is doing in the first five or six minutes," Jackson said.

Dunleavy didn't back off his comments Monday.

"I looked at the film, and it's all real," Dunleavy said. "He (O'Neal) initiates the contact all the time. He makes the move across the middle, and he looks like the Leaning Tower of Pisa. He's putting 350 pounds of torque on you, and then as soon as you try to hold yourself, it's a foul on you, or else you're flopping."

"It's a joke. Nobody else gets away with it."



Senior linebacker Matt Smith (49), a Grants Pass native who is headed to Indianapolis, recorded four interceptions last season.

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Moshofsky Center Monday afternoon with Nwamuo, who will join him this weekend in a trip to Indianapolis for a Colts mini-camp.

Nwamuo was equally excited to join Smith and have a chance at fulfilling his dream, especially considering he wasn't a starter in college.

"I'm going into a situation where I can easily work my way in if I work out and put my mind to it," Nwamuo said. "It's good not to be in flat Indiana by myself. I took a

trip out there and could see 20 miles in front of you."



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Pacific-10 Conference with a 40.7-yard punting average, while Tucker was fourth among receivers with

79.2 yards per game and sixth in receptions with 4.55 catches per game.

"I'm excited those kids are going to get an opportunity," Bellotti said. "I think they're young men that deserve that chance and have certainly helped this team be what it's been the last couple of years."

Note: Oregon will continue practice today and Thursday before ending its spring season with the annual Spring Game at 1 p.m. Saturday at Hillsboro Stadium near Portland. Tickets for the game are currently on sale through Fastixx and cost \$7.

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