



Adam Amato Emerald

Much as she has done throughout the season, senior Edniesha Curry has an uncanny ability to bring the crowd to its feet with her defensive intensity. She said her energy "is always high," and she is excited about the Pac-10 Tournament.

A Balancing Act

■ Shaquala Williams and Edniesha Curry have led the Ducks to their ninth straight winning season

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

Washington State is the sacrificial lamb of the inaugural Pacific-10 Conference Tournament.

But when you really think about it, the Cougars belong to Edniesha Curry and Shaquala Williams.

The Ducks' superstar backcourt duo has finally begun to mesh to their full ability, giving Oregon a lethal one-two punch unchallenged by any school in the conference. And with the tournament coming this weekend, their ability to gel could not have come at a better time.

"It took a lot of time," Curry said about gelling with Williams. "You have two great backcourt players and it took time for us to get used to each other and what each other's strengths are on the court.

"I think we're coming together as one at the right time."

The right time begins tonight, when Oregon and Washington State meet at 6:30 p.m. to kick off the first-ever women's Pac-10 Tournament at McArthur Court.

Williams, a junior from Portland, has not disappointed this season. After sitting out last season because of a torn anterior cruciate ligament suffered before last season, she has knocked down jumpers with precision. Her 17.4 points per game were good enough for second in the conference, and with 18.4 during Pac-10 play, she is unmatched.

Curry, on the other hand, has been a breath of fresh air for a program in need of some renewal.

A transfer from Cal State Northridge, the senior sat out last season,

a requirement for all transfers. Given a starting role this year, Curry has taken every opportunity to impress, placing in the top 10 in the Pac-10 in steals (1.79 per game) and assists (3.29).

"They're two great guards, they're two great individuals and they have two great personalities," first-year Oregon head coach Bev Smith said. "Personally, I give them a lot of credit because had they been on another team,

by just themselves, they'd be an outright leader."

It has been said that opposites attract. In Williams and Curry's case, it's the law.

Curry is the fire, and Williams is the ice. Curry is the "energizer bunny," and Williams is the stoic presence. However you slice it, the two have come to understand that they balance each other out.

"During the game, she probably shows more emotion and I've got more of the straight face, but behind closed doors, she's probably a little more calm than I am," Williams said. "On the court we're a little bit different. She's definitely more of an emotional leader and I am someone who will lead by example.

"I think it's good to have that balance."

Against Washington State last week, the two were on target. Williams hit 9-of-9 shots from the field, and knocked down four treys. Curry, on the other hand, scored only six points, but assisted on nine

Oregon baskets.

"I take different aspects to the game," Curry said. "Whether the team needs me offensively or defensively, that's the thing I have to judge being the point guard of this team. Shaquala was on and it's my job to make sure she gets the ball."

When these two are on, there's no stopping them.

"They certainly played great basketball when they came to Pullman last week," Washington State head coach Jenny Przekwas said. "The combination of the two has been outstanding and they shot the ball very well."

Because Williams, the 2000 Pac-10 Player of the Year, has been with the Ducks for two full seasons and one redshirt year, Duck fans knew very well coming into the season what to expect from the 5-foot-6 sensation. What they didn't know, however, was how well she would respond after having surgery last season.

Their questions have been answered.

"With Shaquala, everyone knows she is pretty much on an even keel," Smith said. "They look for her in moments where we might need something to happen in the game and she's able to do that,

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