

Erik Bishoff Photographer

Redshirt sophomore Matt Short said senior Jay Anderson (55) is "about the funniest guy you'll ever run into."

STAR

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Oregon was Anderson's only collegiate visit after being recruited by schools up and down the West Coast. He said he liked the atmosphere and how the community loves football and basketball so much.

"I just wanted to try something different," the 6-foot-9 center said. "Try to not do the same thing as everybody else and go to the same small school around Minnesota."

Anderson's first years at Oregon were tough: They were the years Anderson didn't play much, if at all.

After working hard during the off-season of his freshman year, Anderson expected to be a starter and play more minutes in his sophomore season. That's when junior transfer Robert Johnson came into play, and Anderson lost his spot.

"That really taught me you can't take anything for granted and (you've) got to keep working," Anderson said. "He (Johnson) did so many things better than me that I realized I needed to keep working on all parts of my game."

He did. In his junior season, it made the difference. Anderson played in all 33 games and averaged 13 minutes per contest. He averaged 2.3 points and 1.6 rebounds per game.

Against then-No. 14 Kansas in the Papé Jam, Anderson had what Oregon head coach Ernie Kent called his "breakout game." That's according to Short and Anderson.

Short hasn't let the term die easy.

"Whenever Jay has a good game, I'm always like, 'Jay that was a breakout game,' just to tease him," Short said. "So any time he gets more than four points, I tell him it's a breakout game for him."

Anderson, now a senior, doesn't find it as amusing.

"He always gives me crap about that," Anderson said. "Matt just won't let it die ever since then, he just beats it into the ground. It's becoming a little annoying, actually."

It's nothing more than harmless banter between roommates. Short even admits, "We just sit around the house a lot of times when we're not playing ball and just insult each other. It's kind of what we do, it's kind of weird, but we get along pretty well."

Anderson is having an even stronger impact in his final season with the Ducks. In Oregon's 68-56 win over Cal on Jan. 29, Anderson played 30 minutes, his most ever as a Duck.

Anderson had nine points and four rebounds, but that wasn't what pleased him. He held Cal's Amit Tamir to zero field goals on the night, and Tamir earned just two points off free throws. Tamir averages 11.4 points per game.

"It seemed like all the other times I've played him, he'd hit threes in my face," Anderson said. "That was really the best part about the game, a lot of satisfaction in holding him down."

Anderson is averaging 3.8 points and

2.7 rebounds per game, but he brings much more to the court. Short said of Anderson's strengths that he is "the most consistent guy we have."

"He's playing with a lot more confidence this year, and has the opportunity to play this year, and he has really responded," Kent said. "He is a very integral part of any success we're going to have this year. He's done a tremendous job for me."

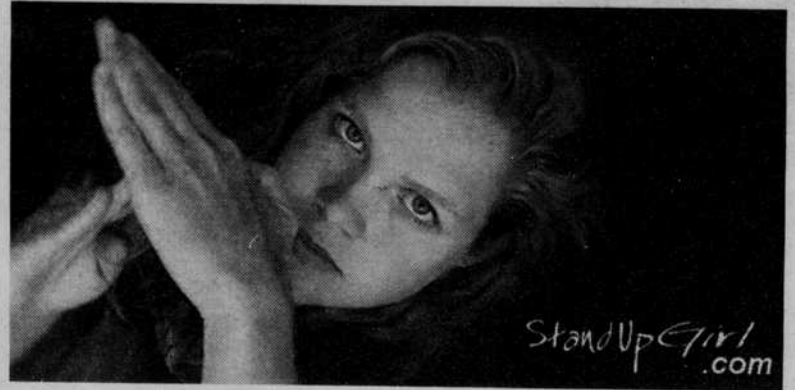
Anderson admits it could have been easy for him to give up and transfer at points in his career when he wasn't playing. But he said it's not just about basketball — it's also about the community.

"The coolest part about playing here is like when I see people around town, and, they know Luke (Jackson) is the star and the scorer and everything, but they come up to me and say how much they enjoy watching me play, and how they enjoy watching somebody play really hard and play good defense," Anderson said. "It really feels good when people do that."

So you may not know who Anderson is. But his teammates know him as an occasional actor who always lightens the mood with his humor, and as a consistent go-hard-all-the-time player.

"Any team could use a guy like Jay," Short said.

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com.



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