

"There are two ways to argue with a woman, and neither of them work."

Utah Jazz forward Carlos Boozer after canceling an interview with a Sports Illustrated reporter because his wife was expecting him home

■ Women's basketball

Who will fly *higher*?

The Ducks will go wing-to-wing with the Portland Pilots in their Mac Court season opener

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon women's basketball team opens up its much anticipated 2004 season tonight against the Portland Pilots at 4:30 p.m. at Mac Court.

With a healthy Cathrine Kraayeveld and the senior leadership of Andrea Bills and Corrie Mizusawa, the Ducks are expected to compete in the upper-tier of the Pacific-10 conference.

The Ducks will need to work on a few things before they are able to contend, including offensive execution. Oregon committed 21 turnovers in its final exhibition game last week against Strakonice BBC.

"In terms of our execution, it's getting better," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said. "We were just rushing things, and that's just part of the preseason."

The Ducks shot 37.3 percent from the floor against Strakonice compared to 50.8 percent in their first exhibition against Western Oregon.

"In our exhibition game (against Strakonice), we weren't shooting as high of a percentage," Smith said. "You would like to see (all shots) drop, but sometimes that doesn't happen."

While the Ducks struggled on offense against Strakonice, they provided a solid defensive effort in both games and will use defense as an offensive ignition.

Oregon's defense will look to contain the Pilots' top returning scorer and West Coast Conference Newcomer of the Year, Ashlee Orndorff. The senior averaged 11.6 points and 8.3 rebounds per game last year.

"Portland is a very solid team," Smith said. "They have three returning starters, and they are a feisty and

aggressive team."

Portland lost its top scorer from last year in senior and two-time first-team all-conference talent Khalila O'Rielly-Williams. O'Rielly-Williams led the WCC in scoring with 16.4 points per game and in steals with 93.

However, the Pilots return three starters — Orndorff, Hanna Seltzer and Whitney Grant — from the team that beat the then-20th ranked Ducks last year 76-58 at Portland.

"One of our biggest strengths this year will be the balance of our returning players," Portland head coach Jim Sollars said. "I don't think we have had four seniors in some time."

For the Ducks, the frontcourt combination of Eleanor Haring, Bills and Kraayeveld will give Oregon a height advantage that it will look to exploit.

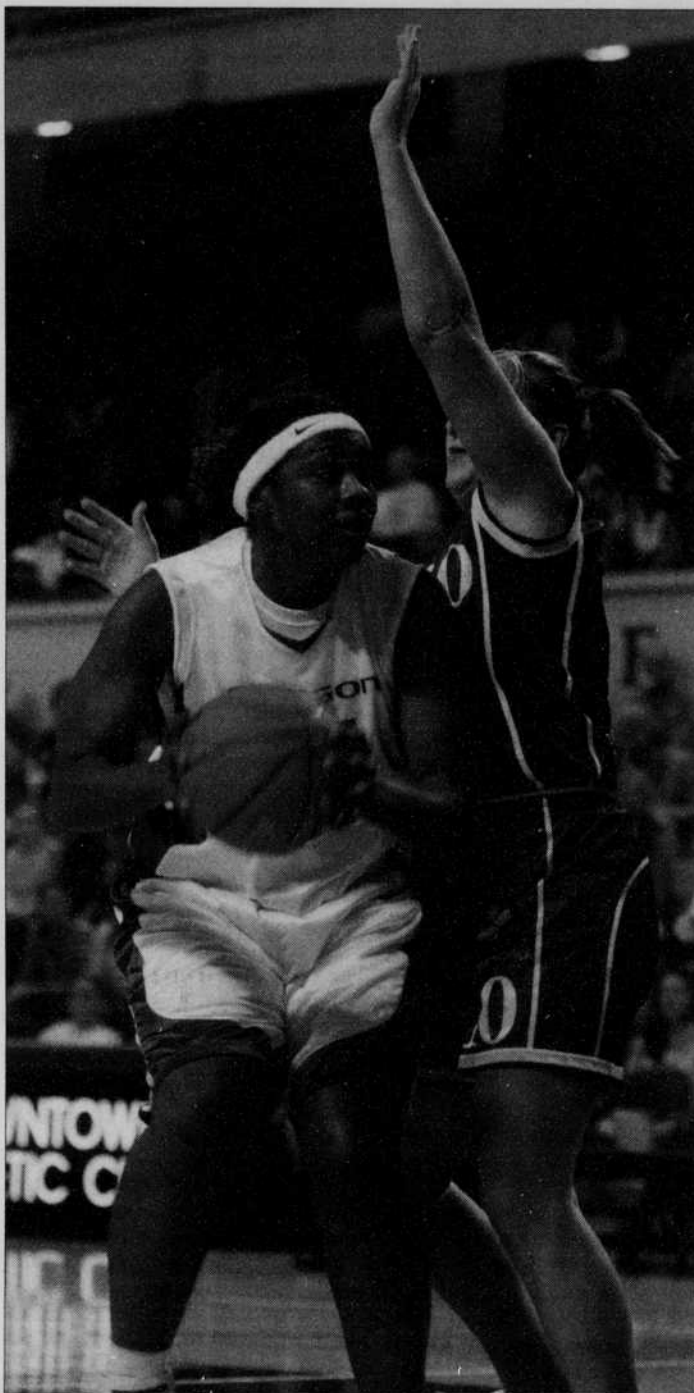
Last season, Bills averaged 11.1 points per game and was one of the Ducks' top offensive weapons after Kraayeveld went down with a knee injury.

"Andrea is someone who has substance on both offense and defense," Smith said. "Portland will be playing a bit undersized, so (Andrea) will be important down low."

Also important is the play of Haring. The sophomore scored 13 points against Strakonice on six for 10 shooting, and if she can remain productive, Haring will take pressure off of both Kraayeveld and Bills in the post.

Oregon owns a 29-2 record in home-opening games, including 26 wins in the last 27 games. The Ducks lead the series against the Pilots 17-3, including an 11-0 record at Mac Court.

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DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Oregon's Andrea Bills, seen here against Strakonice on Friday, averaged 11.1 points per game for the Ducks last season.

■ Duck volleyball

Ducks look to sharpen defensive game in LA

USC's second-ranked hitting percentage and UCLA's middle blockers pose threats for the Ducks

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

Oregon volleyball has been able to focus on defense again now that its offensive attack has found some balance.

Junior Kelly Russell hit with confidence and efficiency for the Ducks (9-16 overall, 1-14 Pacific-10 Conference), tallying 32 kills last week. Sophomore Sarah Mason picked up the other end of the attack, and sophomore Kristen Bitterfound a stroke that was capable of stabilizing the middle.

"I think Sarah coming back makes everybody better," Oregon head coach Carl Ferreira said. "Early in the year, we had three hitters that were dominating our team, while three were growing."

Ferreira said practice time previously went toward developing his younger offensive players instead of fine-tuning the defense because of injuries to Lauren Westendorf and Mason.

"Our focus this week has been on defense," Ferreira said. He believes the defense has not been able to slow down the opposition. Bitter's recent breakout as an attack threat in the middle, combined with Mason's revival, has balanced the Ducks offensively, according to Ferreira.

"Sarah makes our other hitters better by softening up the (opposition's) defense," he said. "If your offense is in sync, your defense is what ends up winning."

It will be hard to get the Los Angeles teams to budge this weekend using either aspect, though. Ferreira said his team does not have the offensive speed of UCLA or the defensive size of USC.

"We have two different types of game plans," VOLLEYBALL, page 6A

■ Men's basketball

Ducks prepared to live up to hype in their 100th regular season opener

Idaho State will face one of the top recruiting classes and fan bases in the country tonight at Mac Court

BY JON ROETMAN
SENIOR SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon men's basketball team opens its 100th regular season against Idaho State at 8 p.m. today at McArthur Court.

One of the most-hyped teams in Oregon history, the 2004-05 Ducks are full of young, talented players with loads of potential. Freshmen guards Malik Hairston, Bryce Taylor, Chamberlain Oguchi and forward Maarty Leunen represent the greatest recruiting class in Oregon history. Teamed with the likes of sophomore point guard Aaron Brooks and junior forward Ian Crosswhite, tonight's opener provides the youthful Ducks a chance to show they're worth all of the attention.

"I'm hoping they'll be sky-high for

the opener, while keeping things in perspective," Oregon head coach Ernie Kent said.

After a pair of exhibition wins, the Ducks will face a Bengal team that ended the 2003-04 season with a 13-18 record but finished second in the Big Sky Conference at 7-7.

"They're a team with very good guard play," Kent said. "They move the ball extremely well."

While Idaho State has far less size than Oregon, the Ducks aren't taking anything for granted. Sunday's exhibition scare against Division II Western Oregon (66-58 Duck win) showed the Ducks and their fans that they still have plenty of work to do.

"There's an awful lot of hype on this team," Kent said. "The Western

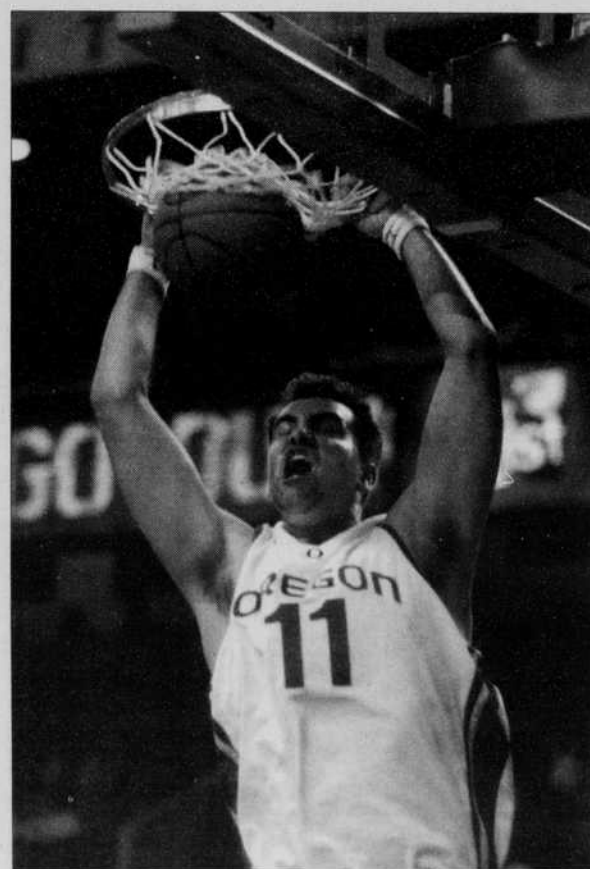
Oregon game should bring everybody back down to earth a little bit. The reality of this year is that there are going to be some games where this team can get up and down, and there's going to be games where this team is going to have to grind out wins."

Brooks and Hairston looked impressive during the two-game exhibition season. Hairston dropped 30 points on Trinity Western in just 19 minutes on Nov. 7, while Brooks scored 21 for the Ducks in a win against the Wolves Sunday.

The duo is likely expected to carry the majority of the scoring load this season while the team gels offensively.

"Our team has a lot of work to do in order to meet our potential," Hairston said. "But we have a team that's willing to make sacrifices and get in here and get better."

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DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Oregon's Ian Crosswhite, seen here against Trinity Western, is coming off an honorable mention All-Pacific-10 Conference season in which he averaged 12.5 points and five rebounds per game.