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02/13/05

■ In my opinion

Kraayeveld makes statement with 'moments' of intensity

The fans weren't the only ones pissed off during Oregon's 78-71 victory over UCLA Thursday night.

And shoddy officiating wasn't the only reason. (Even though it certainly was a factor.)

For the entire game, Oregon senior Cathrine Kraayeveld looked like she was ready to copy UCLA's Lisa Willis and punt the basketball twelve rows into the Mac Court bleachers.

And while it's safe to say that Kraayeveld wasn't exactly "on" in last night's game, she was still crucial to Oregon's victory because with less than eight minutes left in the first half, she had a "moment."

After getting stripped by UCLA's Nikki Blue on consecutive possessions, Kraayeveld came down on the defensive end after an Oregon time out and grabbed a rebound with elbows extended and flying.

Kraayeveld had had enough.

Enough of Blue and her annoying, frustrating presence.

Enough of the missed calls.

Enough of missed free throws and field goals.

"I thought that from that moment on, it was like she means business," Oregon head coach Bev Smith said. "That was really a moment where our senior stepped up and really made a statement."

Doesn't the saying go, when going gets tough, the tough get going?

The box score officially says eight points on 3 of 12 shooting.

For a preseason Naismith Trophy candidate, that's an off-night.



BRIAN SMITH
 LEFTY SPECIALIST

Look what else the box score says.

Eleven rebounds, two blocks, two steals and one assist.

She had another one of those "moments" in the second half when, leading the break off a UCLA miss, Kraayeveld collected a baseball pass from senior Corrie Mizusawa and went up for a layup, which she missed. Kraayeveld grabbed her own offensive rebound, put the ball back up on the glass and drew the foul. Kraayeveld clapped her hands together, and as she walked toward the foul line, she vented an entire game's frustration in a single "yeah!"

"I'm not going to have the greatest shooting night every night," Kraayeveld said. "But I just got to keep my head in it and play good defense and get those rebounds because that's what my team needs."

While it's true that most of the time the Ducks need Kraayeveld to be the team's leading scorer and biggest presence on floor, there are a number of other players that could come in and gladly take the pressure off of Kraayeveld.

Senior Brandi Davis' 28 points off

the bench — which followed an 0 of 6 start — is one of the best examples.

"That's what we've been talking about in practice this week," Davis said. "(The ability) to step up and fill those bigger roles when our other players aren't playing that well."

It's not just Davis either.

Sophomore Eleanor Haring dropping 21 in the Long Island Turkey Classic on 10 of 11 shooting.

Senior Andrea Bills going for 18 points and 15 rebounds in Oregon's victory against then-No. 5 Stanford.

Junior guard Chelsea Wagner, before her season-ending knee injury against Washington, possessed the ability to hit clutch, game-changing three-pointers with ease.

Just ask the Huskies, they'll give a first-person account of the fact.

"We have so many people that can come in and score," Kraayeveld said. "And that's just a testament to people understanding their roles."

Role players consistently filling roles. It's just one of the things that makes good teams even better, and it is something that is a flat necessity for a team like the Ducks.

Because when Oregon is led by Kraayeveld and Co. — instead of just Kraayeveld Inc. — wins over Stanford, UCLA and Arizona should be expected rather than exceptions.

But the best thing is Kraayeveld knows and understands that.

Because that's the kind of team player she is.

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