

"Guys were talking about hunting, but I'm a city kid. I don't hunt ... but I know what it feels like to be hunted. I'm from the 'hood."

CUTTINO MOBLEY | Sacramento Kings guard

■ Women's basketball

Mac Court **Mama**

Freshman Gabrielle Richards is known by teammates as 'Mama Gabes' off the court and is making a name for herself on it as well

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

Classes and basketball just aren't enough. It's almost second nature, but her duties extend beyond just practices and games. There are the calls from sick teammates: the headaches, the pains.

For which she has the solutions. An aspirin here, some hot tea there.

And there are other things.

Rides around town. The all important trips to the mall. Relationship problems.

Anything you can think of — she is always there to turn to.

To the rest of the world, she is freshman center Gabrielle Richards.

To her teammates, "Mama Gabes" will do just fine.

"Say you're sick, and there's no doctors around — you would go to Mama Gabes and tell her you're not feeling well," sophomore Eleanor Haring said. "She would have something (for you), make you tea, something. Or if you need a ride to the mall, she'll take you. She'll be like your mom and get it done."

And it's not only off the court where Richards is getting things done and making an impact.

She's getting it done on the court as well, despite the fact that she is a true freshman trying to fit in on a Division I collegiate basketball team.

"It has been a little bit difficult to try and establish where I fit in and (what) my role (is) on the team," Richards said. "So I struggled a bit to find that, but each game it can be different, I've decided. I'm trying to do what the team needs."

And as the first 20 games indicate, those needs change from day to day. Richards has yet to start a game for the Ducks, but that has not stopped her from becoming the third-leading rebounder on the team.

Or dropping a team-high 15 points against Arizona.

Or pulling down a team-high 11 rebounds on the road against Colorado State.

Or doing something as simple as spelling Andrea Bills or Cathrine Kraayeveld for a few minutes in a tight game.

Whatever the team needs.

In addition, the 6-foot-3 native of Seymour, Australia, isn't particular to what part of the floor she plays on. Richards has the ability to play down low — and somewhat sheepishly admits enjoying this position — but is also quick to counter that she can step outside and play on the perimeter.

"At the moment, I'm kinda doing both," Richards said. "At home I was more of a low-post player, and by the end of the year (2003-04) I moved out to the perimeter and did a lot out there. So it's kinda fun. I really enjoy doing both."

Which doesn't mean the two roles are without their differences.

"You have to do so much more work in the post," Richards said. "Whereas on the perimeter, they just stand there. Posts have to run the full length of the court, guards just run from three-point line to three-point line. But I don't really mind."

Richards spent most of her time at the Australian Institute of Sport playing in the post, alongside fellow teammate Haring.

"Gabe has traditionally always brought leadership and rebounding, and I think she continues to bring that here at Oregon," Haring said. "Her rebounding skills are so good, and it's great to have her down there (in the post). She's pretty solid, and she is getting better every day."

Her skills near the basket propelled her to second in the Women's National Basketball League in rebounds per game, behind only her idol, fellow WNBL star Lauren Jackson.

"(Richards) is a very important impact player from both inside and outside," Oregon

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TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon freshman center Gabrielle Richards, seen here helping up teammate Yadili Okumabua in a game against California earlier this year, has become known for putting in extra effort for her teammates.

■ Pac-10 notes

Surprises, upsets play big part in women's Pac-10

Oregon defeating then-No. 10 ranked Stanford 62-58 in December is just one of many wins in the conference that has defied standings

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

Throw the rankings, the odds and the winning streaks out the window when it comes to college basketball.

Washington State women's head coach Sherri Murrell said her team's confidence was restored when the Cougar men overthrew No. 11 Arizona last week.

"The hope that we can beat a ranked team or overcome streaks and odds ... The men defied that, and we have to build on that," Murrell said.

There are women's teams in the Pacific-10 Conference that can pull off that same sort of win, and some of them have already proved it.

Early in the season, Arizona State upset then-ranked No. 11 Georgia and No. 8 Connecticut by ten or more points each in a two-week span.

UCLA surprised then-No. 4 Texas and No. 14 Purdue on consecutive weekends to earn a low spot in the Associated Press Top 25

poll for several weeks, until it assumed its current downward spiral as a result of an injury to sophomore Noelle Quinn.

On the same day that the Bruins knocked off the Longhorns, Stanford — the conference's best team at 10-1 and 19-2 overall — beat No. 12 Texas Tech.

In its fourth game of the season, Washington also managed to roll over a ranked team. The victim: then-No. 14 Minnesota.

Arguably the biggest defeat between two Pac-10 teams occurred when Oregon upended then-No. 10 Stanford on Dec. 29. The Ducks secured so much confidence from that win that they haven't lost a home game since.

Undeniably, these wins provide underdogs everywhere some much needed motivation and a glance at the possibilities in front of them.

"(The Pac-10) just has great balance in a number of top teams," said Oregon State head coach Judy Spoelstra, whose team is

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OREGON FOOTBALL'S SIGNED RECRUITS 2005

The Oregon football team signed 23 players to a letter of intent Wednesday. The class includes seven junior college transfers, 12 California recruits, a lone Oregon recruit and Jonathan Stewart — the No. 1 rated running back recruit in the nation, according to Rivals.com.

	Pos.	Ht.	Wgt.	Hometown/ High School
Matt Bramow	WR/ DB	6-3	197	Eugene, Ore. (South Eugene)
Jairus Byrd	DB	5-10	204	Clayton, Mo. (Clayton HS)
Tucker Callahan	LB	6-1	205	Fairhope, Ala. (Fairhope HS)
Ed Dickson	TE	6-5	225	Bellflower, Calif. (Bellflower HS)
Matt Dragich (Jr.)	P	6-0	220	San Pedro, Calif. (El Camino College / San Pedro HS)
James Finley (Jr.)	WR	6-2	200	Los Angeles, Calif. (Compton CC / Manual Arts HS)
Kevin Garrett	LB/DB	5-11	205	Carson, Calif. (Narbonne HS)
Levi Horn	TE	6-6	280	Spokane, Wash. (Rogers HS)
Titus Jackson	DB	6-0	180	Pomona, Calif. (Diamond Ranch HS)
Jeremiah Johnson	RB	5-10	186	Los Angeles, Calif. (Dorsey HS)
Derrick Jones	WR	6-0	176	Gardena, Calif. (Long Beach Poly)
Palauni Ma Sun (Jr.)	OL	6-5	365	Waipahu, Hawai'i (Fresno City College / Kahuku HS)
Chris Mulvanny (Jr.)	LB	6-1	213	Pleasant Hill, Calif. (Diablo Valley Coll. / De La Salle HS)
Blair Phillips (Jr.)	LB	6-2	238	Alexandria, La. (Miss. Gulf Coast CC / Bolton HS)
Nick Reed	DL	6-2	236	Trabuco Canyon, Calif. (Mission Viejo)
Pat So'oalo (Jr.)	OL	6-4	340	Kaneche, Hawai'i (Fresno City College / Kailua HS)
Jonathan Stewart	RB	5-10	228	Lacey, Wash. (Timberline HS)
Mark Sunga	LS	5-11	223	Van Nuys, Calif. (Notre Dame HS)
Walter Thurmond III	DB	5-11	166	West Covina, Calif. (West Covina)
Simi Toeaina	DL	6-3	285	Afono, American Samoa (Samoana HS)
Brian Truelove	DL	6-2	265	Snellville, Ga. (Brookwood HS)
Jason Turner (Jr.)	LB	6-1	224	La Crescenta, Calif. (West LA College / St. Francis HS)
Mat Webb	OL	6-5	290	Vancouver, Wash. (Heritage HS)