



# POWER PLAY

Hopes for the success of a national women's basketball league rest in part on the sinewy shoulders of the 10 women of Portland Power

by Inga Sorensen • photos by Linda Kliewer



**D**usk was settling in, engulfing the football field at Western Oregon State College. On the gridiron, a group of sinewy young women roamed. Each was blindfolded. Some were mooing, others were oinking, a few were braying.

Their goal? To follow the sounds and find their partners—to match the oinkers with the oinkers, the mooers with the mooers. You get the drift.

Is it a surreal vision, or perhaps a Pythonesque skit?

"Actually it's an exercise designed to help generate team cohesiveness—a bond—among our players," says Greg Bruce, coach of the Portland Power, one of the eight teams that comprise the American Basketball League, a fledgling women's professional basketball league.

In mid-September, Power players spent about a week at WOSC, located in Monmouth, a rural

community of 7,000 about a half-hour's drive from Salem. The college was founded in 1856 by settlers who crossed the Oregon Trail, which aptly reflects the pioneer spirit of the league.

The players, in their early to late 20s, were there for training camp, which was essentially intensive let-me-get-to-know-you private time for the women, many of whom had only recently been introduced to one another. Only one is an Oregon native, Olympian Katy Steding of Tualatin. The others hail from the East Coast, South and Midwest.

One's familial roots are in Stockholm, Sweden.

Removed from the distractions of Portland, the crew ate meals together, lived together, played ball together and engaged in what Bruce describes as "off-the-court leadership games."

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