

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL | NCAA TOURNAMENT

Ducks prep for VCU star Hyland in 1st round

BY JAMES CREPEA

The Oregonian
INDIANAPOLIS — Nah'Shon "Bones" Hyland may not be a household name to those in the Pacific Northwest, but if Oregon is going to advance in the NCAA Tournament it'll likely depend on how well it contains the VCU star.

The Atlantic 10 Player of the Year, Hyland enters Saturday's first-round game averaging 19.5 points and 4.7 rebounds for the No. 10 seed Rams (19-7).

"He's a great scorer and he scores from different places on the court," Oregon coach Dana Altman said. "He can get to the rim, he can get to the free throw line, he shoots 3s. He'll play with the ball out there and pull one from deep. I think to give our fans a little (compari-

son), he's Remy Martin but he's bigger."

Oregon (20-6) may have the perfect counter to Hyland's abilities though.

The 6-foot-3 guard committed a pair of offensive fouls during the first half of the A-10 tournament final, when VCU lost to St. Bonaventure, and he sat for more than 13 minutes before halftime. Hyland said he has to be smarter in recognizing how defenses are playing him.

"Teams will try to throw anything at me, whether it's on the defensive end or the offensive end," Hyland said. "Me being a smarter player honestly. They did a great job. Just trying to see what I think the defense is going to throw at me. Just being smarter about where I pick and choose when to attack

and when to not."

Taking charges in the paint is a specialty of UO's Eugene Omoruyi, who has taken over 25 charges on the season.

"I'm always willing to step up and take a charge," Omoruyi said. "Anything I can do to help the guys get uplifted and get the team going, I'm willing to help my team win."

Omoruyi (16.7 points, 5.2 rebounds) takes pride in his willingness to take contact. If he can draw a charge on Hyland or Hason Ward, VCU's top shot blocker, it will have a significant impact on how the Rams play offensively.

"It's going to be important that we fight the dribble, stay between them and the basket," Altman said. "But anytime that you can take a charge it puts a thought in their mind and that's

why Eugene has been important to us and valuable on the defensive end because guys are always looking where he is at. It takes away some aggressiveness going to the rim. If he picks up an early charge it definitely will put a thought in their head."

It's not as though teams haven't tried to neutralize Hyland before. He's been remarkably effective and consistent in the A-10, but Oregon presents a unique challenge in its matchup zone, longer guards and Omoruyi inside.

"You're going to get two or three guys or five guys to collapse on you, you sit down and make the right read," VCU coach Mike Rhoades said. "(Hyland)'s been doing that throughout the year. He'll be ready to go; I'm not worried about him."



Al Powers via Pac-12 file

Oregon's Eugene Omoruyi (2) looks to drive around Arizona State's Kimani Lawrence (4) during the quarterfinals of the Pac-12 Conference tournament on March 11 in Las Vegas. Omoruyi leads the Ducks in taking charges, a tactic that might come in handy against VCU, Oregon's first-round opponent in the NCAA Tournament.

Oregon State

Continued from B1

Tennessee could have used the extra shooting help from its fifth-year senior — or anyone, really — as the Vols finished 5 for 26 from the arc while shooting 33% overall.

The Vols caused Oregon State some problems with their press and hit a few shots down the stretch to pull within 10, but started the rally too late.

Now, a team ranked in the top-10 earlier this season is headed home early in a surprise between two programs that started the year on opposite ends of the projection spectrum.

"That was the problem with our team, if you look at our team all year, it was the inconsistency, not really knowing from game to game what we were going to get," Vols coach Rick Barnes said.

"That's the most disappointing thing because to be a championship-caliber team you've got to be more consistent"

Tennessee was picked to win the SEC and looked like the favorites while winning its first seven games. The Vols had an uneven rest of the season, ending with a loss to No. 6 Alabama in the SEC Tournament semifinals without Fulkerson.

Oregon State was picked to finish last in the Pac-12 and exceeded expectations by finishing sixth in the regular season. The Beavers took it a step farther by beating rival Oregon to win their first conference title.

Oregon State rolled its underdog role right into Bankers Life Fieldhouse, throwing the Vols into an offensive funk while building a 19-point lead.

Tennessee had little flow to its offense, its half-court sets filled with lots of dribbling and casting up 3-pointers — making few.

The Vols shot 8 of 31 overall and 2 for 13 from 3 in the first half, pulling within 33-19 on Keon Johnson's off-balance layup at the buzzer.

"I was really surprised, the freshmen especially," Barnes said of Tennessee's start. "The

NCAA Tournament is probably something they've grown up watching. They were out of character in terms of you could tell they were skittish, no doubt about it."

Tennessee shot marginally better in the second half, but Oregon State went 7 for 13 from the arc to stifle the comeback bid.

Johnson led the Vols with 14 points.

Beavers sharing

Oregon State had a good flow to its offense — at least until Tennessee went to a full-court press late — moving the ball well to get open shots.

The Beavers shot 48% against the athletic Vols and had 20 assists on 27 field goals.

"We really have come together as a team and you saw it on display," Tinkle said.

Up next

Oregon State will play Oklahoma State on Sunday.

Tennessee heads home early from what was expected to be a deep March run.

Inequities

Continued from B1

Oregon State senior Aleah Goodman said it's disheartening to see the inequity.

"It's upsetting. But I know the people in the background are working really hard to improve it, make it better," Goodman said Friday.

"We fell short this year in what we have been doing to prepare in the last 60 days for 64 teams to be in San Antonio. We acknowledge that," said NCAA Senior Vice President of women's basketball Lynn Holzman, who is a former college basketball player. "Last night we did have a call with our coaches and team administrators in a way to solicit feedback and their experience thus far.

Players raised questions about the gift bags that they received compared to the ones that the men were given. The NCAA told The AP that the value of the bags was equitable.

This is the first time in the

women's tournament that every game is being played on neutral sites. In the past, campuses would host the opening rounds so teams would be able to schedule weight-room times in those on-campus sites.

Gavitt said that the NCAA will use this opportunity for better collaboration of men's and women's basketball.

"What we pull together in months and years, we tried to do in weeks and days," he said. "That's meant some shortcomings. I apologize and feel terrible about anything that falls short of our lofty expectations. Some of those shortcomings we've seen in Indianapolis as well."

A discussion has already started amongst the conference commissioners and the NCAA on how to not have this happen in the future.

"I hope it opens a broader examination of how we invest, support and make decisions in the sport of basketball at all levels within our system," America East Commissioner

Amy Huchthausen said. "There are complexities and tensions to be sure, but moments like this should force us to re-examine how we got here. This isn't just about dumbbells or swag bags. This is about our fundamental expectations for fairness and equity and ensuring the outcomes of our decisions can meet those standards to deliver a quality experience for our student-athletes."

South Carolina coach Dawn Staley said it's unacceptable for anything to fall short for just the women.

"There's a miscommunication at the highest level of the NCAA. Either it's miscommunication, no communication or just not downright caring if people know what's happening on our (women's) side of things," Staley said. "And that must stop. ... The NCAA owns March Madness in all it's luxury. Then it should feel luxurious to every student athlete, man or woman."

■ The Albany Democrat-Herald contributed to this story.

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