

Senator Duckworth still breaking barriers, and she likes it

By Laurie Kellman
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Breaking down barriers is nothing new for senator Tammy Duckworth, and that's the way she likes it.

The decorated Iraq War veteran who lost both legs when her helicopter was shot down is an Asian-American woman in the mostly white, mostly male, and very fusty senate. And now, with a baby due in April, she'll be the first senator to give birth while in office.

And so, along with her legislative and political goals, the Illinois Democrat is adding a new one: educating the tradition-bound senate on creating a workplace that makes room for new moms.

"She's been through things that you and I will probably never understand. So I'm sure for her (having a baby) is in no way daunting," said representative Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-Washington), who had two children while serving in congress. "She's also someone who's had a whole career in a male-dominated world."

Duckworth, who turns 50 on March 12, says she appreciates the historic nature of her baby's birth, as well as the fact that she represents working mothers and women having babies later in life. She fully expects to have to find a place to nurse in some quiet parlor off the senate floor.

But she says having a baby, a second daughter, is just one of many stops on the trail ahead.

"This is the last job that I want," Duckworth said of the senate seat once held by Barack Obama. The former president is one of several men she ticks off as mentors and role models. They include senator Dick Durbin (D-Illinois), former senator Bob Dole (R-Kansas), and the late Democratic senators Daniel Inouye of Hawai'i and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts — all backers of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which made the nation's landscape a little easier to navigate.

But she sees both problems with compliance and efforts to undermine the law. She points to flaws in Chicago's mass



transit system, for example, and in a ladies' room at a U.S. Embassy. And floating through congress now is a bill designed to curb frivolous lawsuits under the ADA that Duckworth and others say weakens it.

Duckworth is already in the history books. She's the first female amputee elected to congress, the first Asian American to represent Illinois in Washington, and the first member of congress born in Thailand. Her story of resilience and grit set her in the rare company of grievously injured veterans who later served in the senate — Dole, a World War II veteran, and John McCain, who was kept prisoner for more than five years in Vietnam.

"If you take gender out of it, it's not that new," said Duckworth, a year into her own senate term.

But gender can't be ignored as the nation reckons with sexual misconduct at home and in the workplace, especially since congress is not exactly known for being on the leading edge of equality. The first area specifically set up for lactation opened in the capitol only a dozen years ago. The house installed its first lavatory for women lawmakers in 2011. The senate has had its own women's restroom for 25 years.

Duckworth, one of 22 women in the senate, has the experience to give her policy advice and criticisms of President Donald Trump an especially authoritative edge.

His demand for a military parade? "Our troops in danger overseas don't need a show of bravado, they need steady leadership," she said.

His complaint that Democrats didn't sufficiently applaud his State of the Union address?

"I will not be lectured about what our military needs by a five-deferment draft dodger," reads the tweet pinned atop her page, referring to Trump's deferment from Vietnam due to a foot ailment. She refuses to "mindlessly cater to the whims of Cadet Bone Spurs and clap when he demands I clap."

"The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" gave Duckworth full credit for the nickname. In a gag ad, a new G.I. Joe doll resembling Trump, named "Cadet Bonespurs," lolls in a hammock while his comrades march off to war.

When Trump tweets that Democrats don't care about the military, "she takes that personally. She answered personally," said Durbin.

Politics and the military were not

DARING DUCKWORTH. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-Illinois), right, waits for the elevator with an aide on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Duckworth doesn't blend in, and that's the way she likes it. The decorated Iraq War veteran who lost both legs when her helicopter was shot down is an Asian-American woman in the mostly-white, mostly-male, and very fusty senate. And now, with a baby due in April, she will be the first senator to give birth while in office. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

Duckworth's original goals.

As she worked on a master's degree in international affairs in the early 1990s at George Washington University, Duckworth was aiming to become an ambassador. She signed up for ROTC to learn more about the military. She fell in love with the challenge — and with a cadet named Bryan Bowlsbey. They married in 1993. Duckworth has said she applied to fly helicopters because she wanted the same opportunity as men — and because it was one of the few combat jobs open to women.

She was the senior officer co-piloting a Black Hawk on November 12, 2004, when a grenade fired by an Iraqi insurgent exploded in a fireball at Duckworth's feet. She lost both legs and partial use of her arm and faced a gruelling recovery.

As she recovered, Duckworth befriended some important members of the senate. Durbin invited Duckworth to be his guest at President George W. Bush's 2005 State of the Union address. And Dole, who had lost much of the use of one arm to war, dedicated his 2005 book to her. Duckworth, he wrote, "represents all those with their own battles ahead of them."

But for all of her powerful patrons, achievements, and drive, the senate terrain can still seem bumpy.

One day in December as Duckworth wheeled around a corner in the capitol toward the senate's historic vote on tax cuts, a young police officer stopped her. The elevators, he said, were reserved "for members only."

Duckworth looked up and, all business, informed him that she's the junior senator from Illinois.

The officer let Duckworth through — with apologies.

Ohtani has RBI single, two walks in debut at plate for Angels

By Bernie Wilson
The Associated Press

PEORIA, Ariz. — Two-way star Shohei Ohtani had a much better big-league debut as a hitter than he did as a pitcher.

After patiently drawing walks in his first two plate appearances, Ohtani hit a sharp RBI single up the middle in his first spring training start as a designated hitter for the Los Angeles Angels.

"I was happy to get that first hit out of the way, but I was also happy with my first two at-bats," the 23-year-old said through a translator after getting on base three times against three different San Diego Padres pitchers. "I got to see a lot of pitches and I got to face a righty and a lefty. I felt like I put together pretty good at-bats the first two walks."

That's why the lefty-hitting phenom was able to be aggressive in his third at-bat, when he hit the first pitch he saw from righty Michael Mariot for a single that brought in Eric Young Jr., who had doubled with one out.

"One of the reasons why I was able to see so many pitches in the first two at-bats was I just wanted to feel the difference in the strike zones between Japan and the States," Ohtani said. "I felt like I kind of accomplished that, plus I just wanted to be aggressive on the first pitch."

After his single, Ohtani was lifted for a pinch-runner and received a nice round of applause from the fans at Peoria Stadium,



which was less than half full.

Ohtani saw 11 pitches his first two times up and swung at only two.

Batting second, he fell behind 0-2 against right-hander Jordan Lyles before drawing four straight balls in the first inning. He advanced on David Fletcher's single and was erased on Martin Maldonado's inning-ending double play.

Ohtani walked again in the third inning against lefty Buddy Bauman and took second on a wild pitch, beating the throw with an awkward slide.

The Angels lost 4-10 as the Padres hit five home runs, including an inside-the-parker by Franchy Cordero.

Ohtani's first Cactus League at-bats came two days after his first start on the mound. The Japanese newcomer allowed a home run and didn't make it through his scheduled two innings against Milwaukee.

Ohtani said he wasn't nervous.

"Actually, it felt really natural going into my first at-bat. I was able to see the ball really well," he said.

"I was able to see a lot of pitches, so that was really good. I just want to keep it going. I'm seeing the ball pretty well so hopefully I can have better at-bats tomorrow."

Ohtani is trying to become the first player in nearly 100 years to play regularly as a pitcher and hitter.

Asked if hitting is ahead of his pitching, he said: "I think this goes for almost any player, I think my hitting is always ahead of my pitching at this point of the year, just like any other year."

Ohtani spent five seasons with the Nippon Ham Fighters before signing with the Angels as an international free agent on December 10. The Angels paid a \$20

TWO-WAY STAR. Shohei Ohtani of the Los Angeles Angels, right, advances to second base on a wild pitch as San Diego Padres second baseman Carlos Asuaje, left, fields the throw during the third inning of a spring training baseball game in Peoria, Arizona. Two-way star Ohtani had a much better big-league debut as a hitter than he did as a pitcher. (AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall)

million posting fee to the Ham Fighters. Ohtani, who will be under the Angels' contractual control for six years, signed a minor league contract and can receive up to \$2,315,000 in international bonus money from the Angels.

Ohtani likely could have received a deal worth more than \$100 million if he had waited two years to move stateside, but he wasn't interested in delaying his progress for money.

"He saw the ball really well," manager Mike Scioscia said. "I definitely like the two walks. It was a good day for Shohei."

As much as Ohtani needs to understand how big league pitchers can exploit the strike zone and hit their spots, "right now it's really just get your feet on the ground, seeing some velocity," Scioscia said. "That's three good at-bats for Shohei."

SAVE THE DATE!

**The Asian Reporter
Foundation's 20th Annual
Scholarship & Awards banquet
will be held April 26, 2018.**

To obtain a ticket order from, visit
<www.arfoundation.net>.