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**WOMEN'S BASKETBALL**

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## Pac-12 Tournament Champion Oregon State Beavers Look Like A Final Four Caliber Team

Michelle Smith

ESPNW

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SEATTLE -- Final Four teams tend to have a certain profile.

They arrive at the final weekend of the season, on the sport's biggest stage bearing certain qualities.

They are often experienced. They have played in and thrived on challenging schedules. They have frequently experienced setbacks that have become the motivational impetus to achieve. Final Four teams play defense. And they can score inside and out.

Final Four teams look a lot like ... Oregon State.

Oregon State won its first Pac-12 tournament title Sunday and is a projected No. 2 seed when the NCAA tournament bracket is unveiled March 14. AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

The only thing the Beavers might be missing at this point is the pedigree.

The Beavers cut down the nets for the first time in program history Sunday in KeyArena, defeating UCLA 69-57 in a one-sided title game that was hardly that close before the Bruins' late, furious rally injected some drama into a game that was not representative of the rest of a competitive Pac-12 tournament.

Oregon State has now paired its second straight regular-season title with a tournament title, and has to be regarded as the premier program in the Pac-12. It's a far cry from where the Beavers were six years ago when coach Scott Rueck arrived to assume the reins at his alma mater, down to two players on the roster -- a player revolt led to the firing of the previous coach -- and preparing to hold open tryouts to fill out his new team.

"I entered this job with a lot of hope," Rueck said, the conference tournament trophy sitting in front of him on the table and a freshly cut net draped around his neck. "I didn't know if it was possible in this conference. I didn't know enough. Once we got into it, we had certain individuals commit to our program ... that started changing from hope into, 'Yes, we can do this.' "

"I think you have to lose to know how to win. Last year, that is what happened to us. We won the conference outright and it tricks you into feeling like it's easy."

Sunday night in front of a large contingent of Oregon State fans who made the four-hour bus ride from Corvallis to see a coronation, the Beavers took the first step in exorcising some demons. Two years ago, Oregon State reached the Pac-12 title game for the first time and lost to an upstart USC team. Last season, as the No. 1 seed, the Beavers were ousted in their first game and went on to lose on their home floor in the second round of the NCAA tournament to Gonzaga.

Those experiences have shaped this team's mindset and sharpened its focus.

It's a difference apparent to even those outside the program.

"The last couple of tournament experiences turned the weaknesses that got exposed into strengths," said UCLA coach Cori Close, whose Bruins -- like the Beavers -- are a projected No. 2 seed by ESPNW bracketologist Charlie Creme. "The way they applied that to their championship run this weekend was really admirable. You could tell those young women were different. You could tell they were absolutely focused on whatever it took to get what they wanted. They earned it."

Ruth Hamblin had 23 points and a career-high 20 rebounds, and blocked five shots to break the Pac-12 career record for blocks (405). AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Oregon State certainly played for three quarters like a team with something to prove. The Beavers jumped out quickly on UCLA, leading 44-17 at the half. They were up by as many as 31 points in the third quarter before the Bruins' defense clamped down and pulled to within nine points in the closing moments.

But the damage was done, largely by the Oregon State trio of Jamie Weisner, Ruth Hamblin and Sydney Wiese. The team's offensive core combined for 63 points and 28 rebounds.

Rueck called them "superstars."

**Hunter fills key role for Oregon State women's basketball team****Gary Horowitz****Statesman Journal****February 29, 2016**

CORVALLIS – One of the keys to Oregon State's rise as a women's basketball power the last few seasons are the players embraced their roles.

You won't typically find Deven Hunter among the team's leading scorers. Her contributions are not always visible in the box score.

But coach Scott Rueck pointed out that in a review of the plus/minus category – a measure of the point differential when a player is in the game – Hunter leads the team.

The eighth-ranked Beavers (25-4) are at their best when Hunter is on the court. OSU is the No. 1 seed in the Pac-12 tournament and plays the USC/Washington State winner in a second-round matchup Friday at Key Arena in Seattle.

"Her impact on the floor is incredible," Rueck said.

That's lofty praise considering OSU returned three first-team all-Pac-12 players this season – senior guard Jamie Weisner, senior center Ruth Hamblin and sophomore guard Sydney Wiese.

OSU forward Deven Hunter on Senior Day at Gill Coliseum, Feb. 21, 2016. Gary Horowitz/Statesman Journal

Hunter, a 6-foot-3 senior forward from McNary High School, sets solid screens to free shooters, is a lock-down defender, adept passer from the high post, and if there was a category to measure floor burns, she'd be among the nation's leaders.

"She's just got an incredible feel for the game and what it demands on both ends of the floor," Rueck said.

So what if Hunter falls a few points short of the 1,000-point club. She's scored 912 career points entering the Pac-12 tournament and been extremely durable, with 97 consecutive starts dating back to her freshman season.

Hunter has been an impact player during a renaissance for OSU women's hoops. The Beavers have won back-to-back Pac-12 championships for the first time in school history, and will be making their third consecutive appearance in March Madness.

OSU is projected as a No. 2 seed in the NCAA tournament and is a virtual lock to host first and second-round games at Gill Coliseum.

Hunter is averaging a modest 6.7 points and 5.5 rebounds per game this season.

"Definitely I think I could have been in more of a scoring role," Hunter said. "But I've accepted the role I have and you have to do the role you're given your 100 percent best."

While Weisner, Wiese, Hamblin and junior guard Gabby Hanson are the team's leading scorers, Hunter can turn up her offense when needed.

She had a game-high 19 points and 12 rebounds in a 58-50 victory over then-No. 11 Stanford on Jan. 17 at Gill Coliseum, made a career-high five 3-pointers, and was instrumental in OSU ending a 29-game losing streak to the Cardinal dating back to the 2000-01 season. The Beavers trailed 40-30 entering the fourth quarter.

"She took our team under her wing and did whatever it took to win that game," Wiese said. "I think that says a lot about her. She never quits."

The third-leading rebounder in school history with 848 career boards, Hunter has been part of a rebuilding effort at OSU.

OSU forward Deven Hunter (right) with teammate Sydney

OSU forward Deven Hunter (right) with teammate Sydney Wiese during the Stanford game, had 19 points and 12 rebounds against the Cardinal in a 58-50 victory at Gill Coliseum on Jan. 17, 2016. (Photo: Photo courtesy of Oregon State athletics)

In Hunter's freshman season of 2012-13, the Beavers were 10-21 and won four Pac-12 games. But the following season OSU went 24-11 and made its first NCAA tournament appearance since 1996.



## Ruth Hamblin's newfound grit key to Oregon State's stretch run

Gina Mizell

Oregon Live/The Oregonian

February 25, 2016

While scanning the box score following Oregon State's victory over UCLA, Jamie Weisner did not focus on teammate Ruth Hamblin's 16 points or 15 rebounds or six blocks.

Weisner pointed to Hamblin's two steals.

"And both of them were diving on the ground," Weisner said with a grin. "So it's awesome to see that."

It's the number that spotlights a shift in style, as Hamblin noticeably upped her aggressiveness in that crucial victory against the No. 14 Bruins. And that latest phase of Hamblin's development could be crucial as the No. 7 Beavers head into the final weekend of the regular season aiming to clinch a second consecutive Pac-12 title, starting with Friday night's massive contest at No. 13 Stanford, before prepping for another NCAA Tournament run.

"That was a big night for her," Beavers coach Scott Rueck said of Hamblin. "I thought she realized a couple things in that game. She hit a different level, I felt, of grit.

"That's really important for her moving forward, and certainly important for us moving forward, as well."

With her long 6-foot-6 frame and engineering-level intelligence, Hamblin has remained a force on the interior worthy of again earning All-Pac-12 honors and repeating as the league's Defensive Player of the Year. She ranks eighth nationally in blocks (3.37 per game), seventh in the Pac-12 in rebounding (8.8 per game) and 20th in the league in scoring (11.3 points per game) while anchoring a unit that currently sits in the top 5 nationally in field-goal percentage defense (first, 30.9) and scoring defense (fifth, 50.3 points allowed per game).

But has that level of performance come with a ferocious mean streak? Not so much, as it directly contradicts her easygoing nature off the court.

But against UCLA, Hamblin displayed an extra edge against a relentless and athletic Bruins squad. She ripped down rebounds and hit the deck for loose balls. She confidently handled getting trapped while Bruins slapped at her arms to try to snatch the ball away, taking a dribble and finding the passing lane.

Hamblin nonchalantly described her performance, noting UCLA's swarming style, the contest's stakes and the emotions of Senior Night "demands you to rise to your best." But it impressed teammates and coaches who have playfully given Hamblin flak for not getting on the ground, before she joked that she finally "figured out how to dive." Even in later film sessions, the Beavers continued to marvel at the uptick in Hamblin's physicality.

"I was so happy to see it," Rueck said. "Ruth is the most amazing athlete, and she doesn't always play like it, because she doesn't have to. You can get a rebound at 6-6 without jumping, but looks what happens when you do."

That's an area where Rueck says Hamblin needs to continue to grow in order for the projected WNBA draft pick to maintain a long professional career. But more immediately, the Beavers could use that added strength at Stanford, as Hamblin recorded just four points and two rebounds last month against the Cardinal and sat on the bench for the bulk of the Beavers' big rally to stage the landmark victory.

But perhaps one day, everybody will be able to look back at that UCLA contest as the game where Hamblin discovered that extra grit.

"Ruth, I still feel, is just scratching the surface of what she's capable of, and we've seen so much progress," Rueck said. "I thought (against UCLA) we saw some glimpses of the player that she'll need to be to have a career at the highest level, which I think she should.

"I loved what I saw. That's why I love this conference, because it brings the best out."

**Seniors focused on what is still to come for the Beavers****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****February 20, 2016**

Sunday night will be a special one for the Oregon State women's basketball program and those who have shown up in large numbers to support the Beavers the past few seasons.

That's when the team and their fans will celebrate five players who have helped put Oregon State into the national spotlight.

Oregon State will hold its annual senior night about 15 minutes before the No. 7 Beavers host No. 12 UCLA meet at 6 p.m. in a crucial Pac-12 showdown in Gill Coliseum.

"I think it will be emotional but for me, it's like, we still have games to play and so I don't know how emotional I'll personally get on senior night," said Jamie Weisner, who along with Deven Hunter, Ruth Hamblin, Samantha Siegner and Jen'Von'Ta Hill will be recognized. "It's just kind of like a moment to step back and look at what we've accomplished but also realize there's still more to be done."

There will also likely be at least one and possibly two more games for the seniors to play at Gill, if the Beavers finish the regular season strong. OSU is in position to host the first and second rounds of the NCAA tournament, as it did last season.

"I think when it's all said and over and the season is done, that's when it will hit me more emotionally," Weisner said. "Like hey, it's over. My time at Oregon State, like I'll never put on that jersey again. But until then, I'm just going to enjoy it and ride this out."

The Beavers are focused on the task at hand as they have now won 13 straight games and remain tied atop the Pac-12 standings with Arizona State at 14-1.

"This group has created an opportunity to play and they know they'll be in the postseason, they're battling like crazy to have more home games, so they know they have an opportunity at that at least, so maybe this isn't the last game at Gill," coach Scott Rueck said.

"At the same time, what a special moment for Beaver Nation to celebrate this weekend, to celebrate their careers and to thank them for what they've brought to all of us. And they've really put on a show for this community and represented this school so well."

Rueck will always be indebted to what this particular senior class has done for the program. They were the first group to buy into the vision he had for Oregon State.

Some called them crazy for choosing the Beavers four-plus years ago.

"I think when I committed here a lot of people said why go there? They suck, you could do better," Weisner said.

But each had something they wanted to prove.

"I didn't want to go somewhere that was already No. 1, I wanted to have to work and make a story for ourselves that we'll always have something to remember," Hunter said.

And they have. The Beavers ended an 18-year NCAA tournament drought in 2014 when the seniors were sophomores and they won the program's first ever Pac-12 title last season as juniors - they hope to make it back-to-back titles this season - and their names are plastered throughout the record book.

They also take a great deal of pride in seeing Rueck's vision becoming a reality.

"I'll say it has been the best four years of my life so far," Weisner said. "Just to put Oregon State on the map and fulfill those visions and dreams that we all had coming here has been, I guess, a dream come true. Everybody in this program has helped and been there for us."

And they have done it together.

"There's just something special about being part of a class and the relationships that you start in that (first) year in the dorms by yourself," Siegner said. "There's a sort of closeness that you have and trust within each other and so that's been something really special



that I hope you can replicate in other aspects of your life, but who knows. Very thankful to have been part of such a wonderful class and created these friendships with those three now four people.”

Weisner summed up her thoughts on how she hopes this senior class is remembered.

“I would hope they say we inspired people and brought back the culture of Oregon State women’s basketball,” she said. “And ... started a legacy, not left one.”

**Jamie Weisner hopes 'we started a legacy, not left one'****Gina Mizell****Oregon Live/The Oregonian****February 19, 2016**

Oregon State's season is far from over, with a second consecutive Pac-12 championship in the No. 7 Beavers' grasp and another NCAA Tournament run set to begin in March.

But this weekend, OSU will honor and celebrate its instrumental senior class — Jamie Weisner, Ruth Hamblin, Deven Hunter, Samantha Siegner and Jen'Von'Ta Hill — when the Beavers face USC and No. 12 UCLA in their final regular-season home games.

This group's impact on the rise of the OSU program has already been talked and written about plenty. Instead, this week The Oregonian/OregonLive asked each player to reflect and share highlights of their experience in their own words.

Here's Jamie Weisner, who has emerged as a Pac-12 Player of the Year candidate leading Beavers with 17.4 points per game while shooting nearly 50 percent from the floor and pulling down 5.3 rebounds per game.

*It's been a great journey. We came here as freshman — at least four of us — and were in the dorms together, and then so much has happened since. I think we've grown a lot together, just as a team and as individuals. To have that core group of people to go through these four years with has been incredible. It's been the best four years of my life so far. Just to put Oregon State on the map and fulfill those visions and dreams we all had coming here has been a dream come true. Everybody in this program has helped and been there for us.*

*When I committed here, a lot of people are like, "What are you doing? Why are you going to Oregon State? You could do better." All this stuff. My parents were the only ones that really believed in it, because they had seen it first-hand. They had been here and heard what Scott (Rueck) had to say. Almost to—I wouldn't say prove those people wrong—but fulfill that dream and vision has been something that a lot of people didn't think was gonna happen (is great). To stay true to that and to have this team kind of conquer that and just work together as one and not hear any of the outside stuff and just grow each year, I would say there's nothing really better than that.*

*When I signed, I knew there was gonna be something special here. I didn't really know the extent of it at the time. The biggest thing in my mind was beating Stanford, and obviously we finally did that this year. But we've done so much more than just that. Then once I got on campus, I remember sitting on the intramural fields and just thinking, "I'm in in college. This is incredible. The next four years are gonna be so great." It hasn't been anything short of that.*

*The first month of practice, I remember just getting in here and trying to play. I think Patricia Bright probably blocked me 50 times in one month, and I was just like, "Wow, this is a different speed, different pace." And getting in games, obviously the freshmen didn't play that much. But in one of our first games, we had a big lead and all the freshmen, all five of us, including Khadidja (Toure), we were in there at the same time. I remember just being like, "It's all the freshmen!" It was kind of a different sort of freedom. I started to feel comfortable probably a month or two months after I got here and started practicing. I think a couple games in, I started getting more confidence. We were down in Mexico (for a tournament) and I just came in and was like, "I'm just gonna play my game." After that, I kind of just settled in and was like, "OK, I'm supposed to be here. I'm here for a reason. Just don't think about it. Just play."*

*It's hard to even recognize now exactly what is happening, just because we're still in it. But definitely the growth from everybody has been huge. I remember rooming with Ruth (Hamblin) freshman year, and she was constantly studying or sewing or something. Just stuck in her room. Didn't really talk to anyone, really. It was school and basketball. Just to see her flourish into this sassy girl that is talkative (is great). I think the growth is normal, but to actually see it first-hand, it's fun to see.*

*Consistency and constant work ethic have been key. I believe you only progress if you keep working on things and staying hungry and never settling. I pride myself on always putting in extra work. Just hard work, for me personally, has been the biggest part of my progression.*

*Beating Stanford this year, that's up there for sure as a favorite memory. Obviously, winning the Pac-12 championship. I know that wasn't one game, but after the Cal game last year, it was confetti falling, hats and shirts. I mean, that's something you dream of and you mostly just see it on TV, other teams doing it, and finally, that's us. We're on TV. We get to have those pictures. I'm the one holding the picture up. That was pretty great.*

*My favorite off-the-court memories are in the locker room before the game. People dancing, heated conversations. Games of "Would you rather?" something like that. There's been so many little things. Oh, this is a recent one. We were in Utah and the song "Jump Man" came on and we're jumping around. This is before the game. And then we're like, "OK, everybody go around and see if you can jump and touch your head to the ceiling." It was a pretty low ceiling and we're all going around and everybody's (jumping). It gets to Kolbie (Drum), and she jumps*



*as hard as she can and her busts through the ceiling. There's a dent in the ceiling. It was the tile things, but she had hit the metal piece. Her face immediately (drops). She grabs her head and just goes, "Oh..." We were done after that. We were all laughing. Just little stories like that come up every week.*

*I think (this weekend will) be emotional. But for me, we still have games to play. I don't know how emotional I'll personally get on Senior Night. It's just kind of a moment to step back and look at what we've accomplished, but also realize there's still more to be done. I think when it's all said and over and the season's done, that's when it'll hit me more emotionally. I'll be like, "OK, it's over, my time at Oregon State. I'll never put on that jersey again." But until then, I'm just gonna enjoy it and ride this out.*

*For me personally, I hope people remember that I gave it all. I left everything out there on the court, every minute I was out there playing. As a group, I would hope they would say we inspired people and brought back the culture of Oregon State women's basketball and left a legacy. That we started a legacy, not left one.*



## Siegner's versatility key to Beavers' success last four seasons

Steve Gress

Corvallis Gazette Times

February 18, 2016

Despite living just a few miles away, when Samantha Siegner was going through the process of looking at schools she might want to play for in college, Oregon State was the farthest from her mind.

And how could you blame her?

Siegner was a starter on varsity since her freshman season at West Albany High and turned out to be a top-100 recruit, according to ESPN HoopGurlz. She led the Bulldogs to a runner-up finish in the 5A state tournament junior season and had numerous schools interested in her.

Oregon State, meanwhile, was a rebuilding program with a new coach in Scott Rueck. The Beavers had finished his first season 9-21 overall and just 2-16 in the old Pac-10 Conference.

But despite that, Siegner ended up with the Beavers and has been an integral part to a turnaround that has seen OSU win a Pac-12 title — the first in program history — and is poised to play in its third straight NCAA tournament come March.

"They weren't even on my map when they first started recruiting me," she said before practice on Wednesday. "They just really won me over. I visited several times and just conversations with the staff made me feel like this was the place for me."

She was the first of what has turned out to be one of the most significant signing classes in program history.

Her time at Oregon State is quickly coming to a close, and like with most seniors, it has gone by faster than expected. Siegner, along with Jamie Weisner, Deven Hunter, Ruth Hamblin and Jen'von'ta Hill, will be honored on Sunday as part of senior night festivities prior to the No. 7 Beavers' Pac-12 showdown with No. 12 UCLA at 6 p.m.

"Everyone says it flies by and you kind of think you have an idea of what that means but you really don't until you are in your senior year," Siegner said. "So I think I've experienced that. Look it's already the end of the season. It's been a great ride."

Siegner had quite an adjustment to make when she arrived at Oregon State. Despite being a three-time player of the year in the Mid-Willamette Conference and McDonald's All-American nominee, she averaged just 15 minutes a game as a freshman.

"It's always an adjustment for any collegiate athlete to step into a place where they are no longer the big fish in the pond," Siegner said. "That was a major adjustment for me but I feel like I have taken that role in stride and figured out how to work within it."

Siegner has yet to start a game in her college career, but that doesn't mean her role has been less important.

Rueck described Siegner as a "stabilizing force" and someone who "just commands respect for the way she goes about business and she influences people with that."

One way she has made an impact is by becoming the most versatile player on the team by learning to play multiple positions. That has allowed her to see the court in all but two games during her career.

"I probably could put her in at five positions and she knows every position inside and out, I mean, how do you put a value on that?" Rueck said.

Siegner admits that learning all the different positions can be mentally difficult but it helped she mainly played the 3 and the four which she said are "fairly similar."

Siegner has also excelled in the classroom and graduated after just three years with a degree in new media communications. She is applied and was accepted to grad school and has been focusing on political science and communications.

Siegner downplayed the achievement.



"I've typically been a very academically drive person and I credit my high school a lot," she said. "I took a lot of AP classes there and so when I came to school here I was quite a bit ahead which helped me throughout the entire things. Graduating in three years wasn't as remarkable as it seems."

While that is debatable, what has been remarkable has been the bond she and the senior class has developed over the years.

"There's just something special about being part of a class and the relationships that you start in that year in the dorms by yourself," Siegner said. "There's a sort of closeness that you have and trust within each other and so that's been something really special that I hope you can replicate in other aspects of your life, but who knows. I'm very thankful to have been part of such a wonderful class and created these friendships."

Siegner is also thankful for the support she has received from her family. She admits it has been nice to only have to drive 30 minutes for a home-cooked meal.

But the opportunity to see her younger sisters go through high school has also been a blessing.

"I've got to follow their careers and spend time with them and be there and watch them have all the big games they've had," she said. "To me that was really important."

Rueck knows how important Siegner's decision was to the program.

"You don't read her name nearly as often as others," he said, "but her impact is vital to our success."



## Beavers' past makes an impact on current players

Steve Gress

Corvallis Gazette Times

February 16, 2016

Much has changed over the years at Oregon State, but one thing that has remained constant for at least one former women's basketball player may surprise you.

"Gill still smells like Gill," said Leah McMahon, who was a part of one of the greatest runs in women's basketball at Oregon State. "And it's a good smell if you're an athlete. It reminds you of competing."

McMahon was back on campus last weekend with a number of her teammates from the mid-90s as part of the alumni weekend. The players had an opportunity to reminisce with former teammates, some they hadn't seen since they graduated some 20 years ago.

But the time apart felt anything but that long.

"I was like, 20 years look good on you," said Kim McGrew (1992-96). "No one's changed at all."

It was a special gathering with the addition of Anette Mollerstrom (93-96) and Tanja Kostic (93-96), who made the trek from Sweden to be a part of the weekend.

When asked why she decided now was the time to return, Mollerstrom quipped "Well our records started to become broken." Then followed that up with "Nah, I'm just kidding."

Really, though, it came down to the pride she and many others feel with the resurgence of the program under Scott Rueck.

The Beavers went to three straight NCAA tournaments from 1994-96 with the likes of Mollerstrom and Kostic leading the way.

They were the top two leading scorers each of their four seasons in a Beavers uniform, with Kostic still holding the record for most points scored in a career with 2,349.

The Beavers then failed to reach the NCAA tournament until Rueck guided the Beavers back there in 2014. This year's team is poised to once again be a high seed and host the first two rounds of the tournament.

"I told Tanja and Annette, I said you should pat yourself on the back because we helped pave the way," McGrew said. "We put our investment of sweat, blood and tears into this place and we made it a legacy."

The alums had an opportunity to get to know the current players at a mixer after practice on Saturday and were blown away with how receptive they were to what they had to say.

They were also blown away with the facilities and how much they have changed, specifically the recent addition of the practice facility and the weight room.

"Man are these girls lucky," McMahon said. "These facilities are gorgeous. And man, what we could have done with a 24-hour practice facility and that weight room."

So is there a little jealousy?

Maybe, but it also put in perspective what those teams accomplished.

"I think walking through the doors and to see how it's changed, for me in my mind, I began to think little was much," McGrew said. "Because you never knew what you had back then. And we did so much with what we had and I think that's where the friendship and the synergy really built because we made it what it was."

While having so many former players who had a lot of success could put some pressure on current players to live up to what they did, the message McMahon had for one of the younger players was to not let that be the case but to just continue what they have started.



“That would bless us so much if you just let it be your legacy, let it be your own but just keep the story going,” she said. “It’s inspiring when people rise out of nothing and I think that’s my favorite part of Scott’s story.”

But the biggest takeaway may have been what kind of a bond they are building not only with the school, but each other, and how they will always be connected.

“I think the most important thing that I sort of feel is that even though we had great success, we could have lost and I would still be here today,” Mollerstrom said, adding she hopes this year’s team has a reunion like this in 20 years.

“Then you know what they did in there these couple years mattered.”

That was the biggest takeaway for current senior Jamie Weisner.

“This is family for life and I think they’re a very good example of that,” she said. “Some of them haven’t seen each other since they left and they come back and it’s like a sisterhood. I think that’s really neat to see.”

**On Alumni Weekend, Oregon State women's basketball history connects with present****Gina Mizell****Oregon Live/The Oregonian****February 15,, 2016**

CORVALLIS — As Kim McGrew watched Oregon State, the No. 7 team in the nation, go through a Saturday workout and toured the Beavers' sparkling practice facility, she turned to Tanja Kostic and Anette Mollerstrom.

"You should pat yourself on the back, because we have paved the way," McGrew told her former teammates. "We put our investment of sweat, blood and tears into this place, and we made it a legacy."

All three were in town for OSU's annual Alumni Weekend, where more than 20 former Beavers took part in the festivities. Yet it also served as an unofficial 20-year reunion of sorts for several members of the mid-1990s squad that, at the time, put together unprecedented success, allowing those players to reconnect with each other while also forging a bond with the current group of Beavers making a similar national rise.

"It was super cool to just get to meet them and interact with them," center Ruth Hamblin said, "because they had such a dynasty here and they've done so much for the program.

"We're just feeding off of what they've built Beaver Nation into, and we just want to continue that legacy."

From 1994-96, OSU made three consecutive NCAA Tournaments under coaches Aki Hill and Judy Spoelstra. The Beavers were led by the Swedish duo of Kostic, a two-time Pac-10 Player of the Year and OSU's all-time leading scorer (2,349 points) and rebounder (1,001), and Mollerstrom (1,582 career points), and thrived on playing tough defense and rebounding.

The 2015-16 Beavers, meanwhile, are on their way to a third March Madness appearance in a row — the program's first NCAA Tournament trips since 1996 after Scott Rueck completely rebuilt the program following the LaVonda Wagner fallout. They captured a Pac-12 title last season and currently control their own destiny to repeat as conference champions. They boast three 1,000-point scorers in Jamie Weisner, Sydney Wiese and Ruth Hamblin, the school's all-time leader in blocked shots (Hamblin) and three-pointers (Wiese), the reigning Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year (Hamblin) and a 2015-16 Pac-12 Player of the Year contender (Weisner).

And over the weekend, the program's past got to blend with the present. Following practice Saturday, the Beavers and alumni split into groups for games and a mentoring session, which Rueck described as "surreal" and "like a movie or something."

McGrew challenged the Beavers, telling them "any record you see, it's mandatory that you break it." They also talked about cherishing the moments, continuing the program's story and staying connected even after leaving Corvallis.

"This is family for life, and I think they're a very good example of that," Weisner said. "Some of them haven't seen each other since they left and they come back it's like a sisterhood."

In OSU's 1995-96 season highlight video, Mollerstrom verbalizes in an on-camera interview that she may be saying goodbye to several OSU people for good as she prepares to return to Europe.

Yet twenty years later, Mollerstrom sat with five former teammates -- Kostic, McGrew, Kris Walsh, Leah McMahan and Missy Smith -- while surrounding an office table inside Gill Coliseum. Laughter often broke out, contributing to the lingering ab soreness from the previous night's reminiscing, McMahan joked. McGrew boasted that "20 years looks good on us." Then, those former Beavers settled into the stands to watch OSU blow out Utah to capture its 12th consecutive victory.

They celebrated their historic past — and the present group of Beavers building their own legacy.

"I hope they have a reunion like this 20 years later," Mollerstrom said. "Because then they'll know what they did in these couple years mattered."

**UW coach has high praise for Beavers****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****February 6, 2016**

SEATTLE — Mike Neighbors watches a lot of basketball from around the country.

After seeing No. 9 Oregon State in person go up against his Huskies on Friday night, the third-year Washington women's basketball coach high some lofty praise.

Neighbors wasn't shy about what he thought of the Beavers, who led by as many as 20 points in the third quarter before leaving Alaska Airlines Arena with a 61-53 Pac-12 win.

"I think Oregon State's one of the top five teams in the country and I hope they are because that means we're in the conversation," Neighbors said. "And I believe that they are the way that they're playing right now. The way they played (against) Arizona State and the way they played (Friday night).

"They've gone into Notre Dame and played close there, they had a tough night against Tennessee at home but I honestly believe, and I watch basketball all across the country, they are one of the top five teams in the country no doubt about it."

The Beavers are likely to move up at least one spot on Monday after they drubbed No. 8 Arizona State, 67-44, at home on Monday night. That is, if the Beavers (19-3, 10-1) don't stumble at Washington State (12-10, 3-8) on Sunday. The teams meet at 11 a.m.

One of the big reasons Neighbors is confident saying that is, most likely, due to the defense the Beavers play.

Oregon State isn't flashy, the Beavers just play solid until a shot is taken.

The Beavers are leading the nation in field goal percentage defense, allowing teams to shoot just 30.8 percent per game.

OSU held Arizona State to 30.9 percent (17 for 55) on Monday and forced UW into a 16-for-53 performance (30.2) on Friday.

Neighbors credited head coach Scott Rueck and assistant Jonas Chatterton, who prepares the scouting reports, for getting the players to know the opponents tendencies so well.

Of course, it all starts with having senior Ruth Hamblin anchoring the middle.

"First of all, Ruth around the basket really eliminates easy plays," Neighbors said. "Like she eliminates your stick backs, the layups. Kelsey (Plum) got in there a couple times and it wasn't even Ruth and she was like, 'I'm so open' but she bricked them. She never misses those shots. That's the Ruth factor.

"Our kids know her nickname's 'The Hammer' and when you know your kids know her nickname's 'The Hammer,' you know you're in trouble."

He also said point guard Sydney Wiese, known mostly for her 3-point shooting, doesn't get enough credit for being the quarterback on the floor on the defensive end.

"She is so good at talking in transition defense," Neighbors said. "We were trying to run but she had her troops matching up and going to the right spots and she was so good at saying 'there's Plum, there's (Talia) Walton, there's (Chantel) Osahor.'

"And that's a huge thing. If you're not down there on the floor you don't see, you don't hear (that). She's really, really good at that."

Plum, who entered the game leading the conference in scoring and was second in the country at 27.0 points per game, scored 30 against the Beavers. She did hit 10 of 22 shots and all nine free throws, but 11 of those points came after the Beavers led by 14 with just over two minutes left.

She was just 6 for 17 after three quarters and had just four free throw attempts.

Neighbors said her struggles were all because of Oregon State's defense.



The Beavers gained control in the second quarter when they limited UW to 2-for-15 shooting.

"I thought we forced them into a lot of tough shots and then our defense always sparks our offense and that's where we got the lead," senior guard Jamie Weisner said.

That has been the case most of the season.



## In midst of spectacular season, Washington native Jamie Weisner set to make final swing through home state

Gina Mizell

Oregon Live/The Oregonian

February 4, 2016

Oregon State is back on the road this weekend, but Jamie Weisner will see plenty of friendly faces.

It's the last Seattle-Pullman swing of Weisner's career, beginning with Friday's showdown at No. 24 Washington. And there's perhaps no better time for the senior guard to return to her home state, with the No. 9 Beavers back atop the Pac-12 and Weisner playing at a level that makes her a serious contender for the conference's Player of the Year award.

"I've thought about it, but it just motivates me," Weisner said of her final regular-season trip to the state. "It doesn't make me nervous or anything like that. It's always fun playing in front of my family and friends.

"I know a lot of people are coming out, so I'm excited to show them this team and what we've got."

What Weisner's Beavers have got is a surging squad, winners of eight in a row after pummeling No. 8 Arizona State 67-44 Monday night. And Weisner is a big reason why, collecting 25 points on 9-of-10 shooting against the Sun Devils to go with five rebounds and three assists.

Weisner has matched her relentless energy by developing into a master of efficiency, ranking fourth in the Pac-12 in both scoring (17.3 points per game) and field-goal percentage (50.8 percent) by attacking the rim, pulling up for midrange jumpers and launching from three-point land. She's nearly perfect from the free-throw line at 88.9 percent. Monday night, Arizona State coach Charli Turner Thorne praised Weisner's scoring output against the Sun Devils given the degree of difficulty, estimating that "close to half her shots, she made with a hand in her face ... that's a great player."

But Weisner has also filled out her game as a reliable rebounder (5.4 per contest) while seeing the floor much better as a playmaker. She's morphed into arguably the Beavers' biggest vocal leader. And coach Scott Rueck, a self-proclaimed defensive junkie, now calls Weisner "outstanding" on that end of the floor as part of a Beavers unit that leads the nation in field-goal percentage defense (30.9) and ranks fourth in scoring defense (50 points allowed per game).

"That was absolutely a weakness her first couple years and people would go at her," Rueck said. "Now, I trust her in any scenario defensively, and I didn't her first two years. She would come off the floor."

Weisner estimates about 25 family members and friends will be at Friday's contest in Seattle. As for Sunday's contest in Pullman, which is about 35 miles north of Weisner's hometown of Clarkston, Weisner can't even guess. Clarkston High School usually brings a bus of supporters, she said, while childhood friends who are now Washington State students are sure to drop by.

They'll be supporting the Jamie Weisner they've always known, bringing friendly faces to OSU road environments. But they'll also be supporting a serious Pac-12 Player of the Year contender.

"I don't see a hole in her game. I really don't," Rueck said. "Because of that, I think she absolutely belongs in that conversation. How do you argue against her?"



## Marie Gulich feeling '100 percent more comfortable' in second season with Oregon State Beavers

Gina Mizell

Oregon Live/The Oregonian

January 22, 2015

CORVALLIS — From Oregon State's comeback victory over Stanford, it will be easy to remember Deven Hunter's suddenly deadly three-point shot. Or Jamie Weisner's monster fourth quarter.

But a more subtle key to the Beavers' furious rally came in the middle, where Marie Gulich — not Ruth Hamblin — occupied the paint down the stretch.

Gulich checked in as part of a typical substitution pattern. When OSU began its run, coach Scott Rueck was not about to mess with the lineup. And being on the floor during crunch time of one of the signature wins during OSU's national ascent is the latest piece of Gulich's growth, which continues Friday night when the 11th-ranked Beavers play at Utah.

"I feel 100 percent more comfortable," Gulich said earlier this week.

Gulich, a sophomore from Germany, used adjectives like "shy" and "insecure" to describe her freshman season, when she averaged 3.2 points and 2.9 rebounds per game. It's understandable, given she was not only making the leap from high school to college basketball but also adjusting to life in the United States.

And as with all OSU players, Rueck first focused on developing Gulich's defense.

At first, the coach "had a hard time playing her," because she lacked an understanding of the physicality and quickness required on that end of the floor at the Division I level. But by the Beavers' final game, a second-round NCAA Tournament loss to Gonzaga, Gulich was on the floor during crucial second-half minutes because of her defense — grabbing five rebounds and snagging two steals as a bright spot of an otherwise disappointing close to the season.

Gulich vowed to take that positive personal momentum into the offseason. In the summer she returned to Germany, where former teammates and coaches raved about her increased quickness, athleticism, court vision and touch on her shot.

"They were super excited," Gulich said. "It just made me realize how much I actually improved and made me come (back to OSU) more confident in myself, which helped me a lot in just going for it.

"I don't think about it too much anymore."

That's helped Gulich become a self-proclaimed "energy-bringer" off the bench, averaging 4.1 points and 4.3 rebounds in 15.7 minutes per game. These days, her strength and awareness on defense — particularly while staying with smaller guards in help situations — is "night and day," Rueck said. And on offense, she's grasped OSU's scheme enough to also learn the power forward spot, giving the Beavers the option of playing the 6-foot-5 Gulich and the 6-foot-6 Hamblin at the same time while allowing Gulich to utilize her face-up game.

"There's no lost minutes with her," Rueck said. "You put her in, I can pretty much call whatever."

There's still the occasional snag, of course. Like in OSU's loss to No. 18 Tennessee last month, when Gulich was called for two five-second calls on the perimeter — a rule it turns out she did not know.

A "hard lesson" learned, Rueck said, as coaches continue to groom Gulich to likely step into the starting lineup after Hamblin departs following this season. Gulich can point to multiple areas she still wants to refine, most notably her shot selection in the post based on how the defender moves. She'll surely get minutes Friday against Utah standout Emily Potter, who ranks second in the Pac-12 in rebounding (11.4 per game) while adding 16.4 points per game.

Yet Gulich has already been trusted to occupy the middle of the floor during the comeback of one of the Beavers' signature victories.

"I've just seen her just understand what we do at a completely different level," Rueck said. "I feel like she's effective on both ends of the floor, every possession."

**In comeback win over No. 11 Stanford, No. 12 Oregon State finally says 'enough'****Gin Mizell****Oregon Live/The Oregonian****January 17, 2016**

CORVALLIS — Enough.

That was Deven Hunter's mentality when she authoritatively declared during a timeout that she was not going to lose to Stanford four years in a row.

Trailing by as many as 15 points in the second half, that became the mentality of an Oregon State squad that was not going to let a ranked team leave Gill Coliseum victorious for the second time in a month.

In the midst of an epic comeback, that mentality radiated throughout Gill Coliseum as the Beavers squashed the narrative that they could not get over the Stanford hurdle or win the big game.

In what could only be described as a blur by coach Scott Rueck, 12th-ranked OSU staged a furious fourth-quarter rally, outscoring No. 11 Stanford by 18 points to top the Cardinal 58-50 Sunday night in the program's first victory over Stanford since 2001.

"You're kind of down and out and it doesn't feel good," Rueck said. "And then all of a sudden, magic happens. And the next thing you know, you're on a run, and it's a wave that can't be stopped.

"Next thing you know, the clock runs out and you're up eight and (you say), 'How the frick did that just happen?'"

It was the latest watershed moment for a program that has gained plenty of national credibility but is still proving it deserves elite status. OSU (14-3, 5-1 Pac-12) outscored Stanford 28-10 in the fourth quarter — nearly matching the 30 points it totaled in the first three periods combined — including an 18-2 run that turned a double-digit deficit into a 56-48 lead.

"It was a stretch of basketball that none of us will ever forget," Rueck said.

Throughout the quarter, OSU stifled Stanford (14-4, 4-2 Pac-12) with its new-look zone defense, cutting off the Cardinal's guards on the perimeter and limiting it to 2-of-12 from the field in the quarter.

Enough.

"It was the defense that we rode down the stretch," Rueck said.

On offense, the Beavers played with more urgency, repeating the same three or four plays that opened Jamie Weisner (who scored 14 of her 18 points in the second half and added six assists and four steals) and Gabby Hanson (who scored all seven of her points after intermission) up for more open looks. That gave the Beavers a needed lift on a night when, in addition to playing without All-Pac-12 point guard Sydney Wiese for the eighth consecutive contest, Stanford largely neutralized Beavers standout center Ruth Hamblin, who connected on just two of her seven shot attempts and sat on the bench for the bulk of OSU's comeback.

Enough.

"We attacked," Rueck said. "We saw the floor a little quicker, the ball started going down."

Hunter, one of the most unlikely of long-distance shooters, made the Cardinal pay for leaving her open on the perimeter all game again by sinking her fifth three-pointer (a career-best) to put the Beavers up for good with about three minutes to play.

Enough.

"In warmups I didn't miss one," said Hunter, who finished with a game-high 19 points and 12 rebounds. "(I told myself), 'Don't think about it, because then you're gonna miss every single one.' I just went for it."

Then Weisner drilled the dagger from behind the arc to give OSU a 55-48 with less than a minute to play and pumped her fist in celebration.



Enough.

"I didn't really think about it, just let it go and it went in," Weisner said. "I felt the whole crowd erupted, and that was awesome. That feeling is incredible, and you don't get that many times in your life."

It was a seismic momentum shift compared to the first 30 minutes, which Rueck described as "a depressing scene" and "miserable."

Despite solid defense, OSU's offense — which flowed beautifully against California less than 48 hours earlier — was clunky, connecting on just 8-of-23 field-goal attempts in the first half and going nearly six minutes in the second quarter without scoring. The Beavers also battled foul trouble, with versatile reserve Samantha Siegner picking up three and starters Hanson and Weisner picking up two apiece.

What helped the game finally flip in the final period? Rueck points to a culmination of several key contests during this group's journey.

OSU learned how to win Pac-12 games two years ago, when the "infamous Jamie game" — when Weisner broke her hand punching a wall following a narrow loss at Arizona State — sparked an 11-game winning streak that propelled OSU to its first NCAA Tournament since 1996.

Then the Beavers learned how to win a Pac-12 title last season, going 16-2 in league play and earning a No. 3 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

But Rueck acknowledges beating Stanford, a perennial national power that has largely dominated the conference for more than a decade, was the "one thing left undone" during last year's regular-season run. And other crushing defeats along the way — getting upset by Gonzaga on their home floor in the second round of the NCAA Tournament last season, staging a similar comeback but falling just short against Tennessee less than a month ago — helped the Beavers learn how to clear the "big game" hurdle.

Following the Beavers' traditional postgame celebration, where fans are invited onto the floor for eight minutes for autographs and photos, Weisner walked down the stairs to Gill Coliseum basement and rounded a corner on the way to OSU's locker room. She shared with a bystander that a group of supporters she'd just met had told her they almost left the game when the Beavers had fallen behind by 15 points.

"Glad you didn't," Weisner replied to those fans, flashing a big grin while re-telling the story.

They got to witness OSU finally say enough.

**Gabby Hanson more confident offensively for Oregon State Beavers****Gina Mizell****The Oregonian/Oregon Live****January 14, 2016**

CORVALLIS — Standing just outside the Gill Coliseum media room, Scott Rueck high-fived Gabby Hanson.

Hanson had just totaled a game-high 19 points and grabbed six rebounds in a resounding victory over Cal Poly on Dec. 21, Oregon State's first game without injured All-Pac-12 point guard Sydney Wiese. Then the coach told the junior guard that that the Beavers would need her to keep contributing at a higher level while Wiese was out.

That's been the added layer of Hanson's evolution this season, which began as morphing from defensive spark off the bench to entrenched starter. Now Hanson has become a legitimate double-digit scoring threat as a viable complement to Ruth Hamblin and Jamie Weisner, a trend she aims to continue this weekend when the 12th-ranked Beavers host California on Friday night and No. 11 Stanford on Sunday.

"It's kind of weird to say that Syd going out gave me more confidence," Hanson said. "But (I'm) just understanding my role and just being more aggressive, having a more aggressive mindset — especially offensively."

Hanson has always been a bit of a do-everything player with a defense-first mentality. And that has not changed while sliding into the starting lineup, where she still constantly "hounds the ball," Rueck says, for the length of the court against the quick and athletic guards in the Pac-12.

It's taken more time for Hanson to develop her offensive game, where she can both shoot from the outside and slash to the basket.

She showed flashes throughout her first two seasons, tallying 19 points in the Civil War as a freshman and scoring 14 against Cal last season when the Beavers clinched the Pac-12 title. On the season, she's averaging a career-best 9.5 points per game. And she's scored in double figures in four of the six games the Beavers have played without Wiese, leading the Beavers in points in three of those contests.

After a handful of shooting-percentage clunkers in the early season — going 2-of-13 at Marquette, 4-of-13 at No. 25 USC and 2-of-12 at No. 17 UCLA — Rueck was most pleased with Hanson's efficiency in OSU's Civil War sweep last weekend. The coach called her decision-making "outstanding," knowing when to shoot and when to pass. Over the two games, she connected on nine of 20 field-goal tries and finished with 11 points on Friday and 12 on Sunday. And she brought a highlight play in Sunday's win, connecting on a fadeaway jumper in the lane against three defenders as the first-quarter clock ran down.

"She just played a really smart weekend," Rueck said.

Rueck told reporters earlier this week that he's "hopeful" Wiese could return from her right hand injury this weekend. If that happens, Hanson will continue to bring her lockdown perimeter defense. She'll continue to bring the same energy as an entrenched starter as she did as the first player off the bench.

And she'll also continue to bring the confidence -- and the legitimate threat -- to hit double-digit points.

"It's been fun to watch her embrace the starting role," Rueck said, "(and) also embrace a little added responsibility to score."



## How Jamie Weisner became one of the game's most efficient scorers\

Graham Hays

ESPNW

January 7, 2016

SOUTH BEND, Ind. -- It is to Oregon State's benefit, especially now with another of its influential players sidelined by injury, that Jamie Weisner has become one of the most efficient scorers in college basketball.

Just as it was to the benefit of all involved, not least for their health, that she was similarly prudent when launching spears instead of jump shots.

The games we play are fundamentally simple. Run faster. Jump higher. Score more goals. That there is a level of complexity beneath, like the clockwork concealed beneath hour and minute hands, was clear to Weisner soon after she hefted a javelin for the first time as a high schooler.

"The first time I picked it up, I turned it, tried to throw it like a baseball and cracked myself in the back of the head," Weisner recalled.

She got better, winning two state titles. She learned to be efficient. Sprint as fast as your body allows down the runway and propel the javelin with every ounce of force your muscles can muster and you are as likely to succeed as someone is to play music like John Coltrane merely by blowing into a saxophone as hard as they can.

Effort isn't enough. In excess, it isn't even helpful.

"Technique is the biggest thing in javelin, for sure," Weisner said. "It's not even so much how much strength you throw it [with], it's getting your whole body into it and just getting the steps down. Once you conquer that, it just becomes muscle memory, and your whole body becomes a rubber band shooting the javelin out to the sky."

"Offense is like jazz [music]. It's nice and smooth. ... You never see a great player that looks like they're playing hard on offense. It looks so easy. That happened for Jamie a year ago."

Oregon State coach Scott Rueck on Jamie Weisner

Defense adds a complication that separates shooting a basketball from throwing a javelin, in which taking a charge would require whole new levels of commitment, but the principle is not altogether different. The leading scorer for a basketball team still intent on defending its Pac-12 regular-season title despite now playing without Sydney Wiese, the point guard out with a hand injury, Weisner is a model of similar rhythm on the court.

"There is a time, I think, in everybody's basketball life when the game slows down," Oregon State coach Scott Rueck said. "It just becomes this beautiful -- it's like a dance almost, where you just see everything happening at once and you learn to play within that. You can stay nice and relaxed and calm through it.

"We talk about [that] defense is, in some ways, like rock music -- and offense is like jazz. It's nice and smooth. And it should be. You never see a great player that looks like they're playing hard on offense. It looks so easy. That happened for Jamie a year ago."

Jamie Weisner shoots 50.3 percent from the field, including 40 percent from 3-point range, and averages a team-best 17.5 points. Matt Cashore/USA TODAY Sports

This, then, is the intersection of analytics and intangibles. Numbers don't make Weisner a success. That still comes from all the mornings she wakes up early and heads over to the otherwise empty team facility to put up extra shots. It comes from competitiveness and effort, those things some people fear numbers minimize.

They don't. The tangible enhances the intangible. The numbers just make it clear how little effort she wastes.

While not as familiar as points, rebounds or assists, effective field goal percentage is hardly advanced analytics. It is less a scalpel in its attempted precision than a slightly better sledgehammer. By more heavily weighting 3-pointers, otherwise no more valuable than a shot worth two points when calculating traditional field goal percentage, it accounts for the idea that someone who shoots 40 percent on 100 3-point attempts produces the same number of points (120) as someone who shoots 60 percent on the same number of two-point attempts.

"She's a genius at the midrange. It's crazy how well she scores at 12 to 15 feet. Yet when she came, she didn't have that."



Coach Scott Rueck on Jamie Weisner's development

By traditional measure, Weisner shoots 50 percent from the field. For a guard who takes a lot of jump shots, that is impressive enough in its own right. But factor in that she shoots 42 percent from the 3-point line and attempts roughly five such shots per game and her effective field goal percentage was 58.8 percent through Jan. 3.

(Weisner also shoots 97 percent from the free throw line, which is not considered in effective field goal percentage but is in other analytical measures like true shooting percentage that also place her at or near the top of the Pac-12's most efficient offensive players.)

So while Weisner trailed Minnesota's Rachel Banham, Ohio State's Kelsey Mitchell, South Carolina's Tiffany Mitchell, Washington's Kelsey Plum and South Florida's Courtney Williams, among others, when espnW ranked the nation's top 25 players in the preseason, she began the new calendar year with a better effective field goal percentage than each of those scorers asked to play similar roles on ranked teams. And while not as prolific in total points as some of those peers, Weisner still accounts for nearly a quarter of the points Oregon State scores this season.

As much as the idea that you miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take makes for a nice motivational mantra, the reality is that efficient offenses work because players take the shots they are likely, or at least likelier, to make. It's as true for Oregon State as for the San Antonio Spurs.

Weisner in good company

Jamie Weisner compares favorably with espnW's preseason top 25 players, but she isn't alone. Here are five candidates, with their effective field goal percentages through Jan. 3.

Madison Cable, Notre Dame: 66.3 percent. For context, this is essentially the same efficiency as South Carolina's Alaina Coates or Baylor's Nina Davis. Statistically speaking, the most apt comparison for efficiency that defies convention is a certain guard for the Golden State Warriors.

Shatori Walker-Kimbrough, Maryland: 64.4 percent. It didn't work out against Ohio State, but Maryland was in position for that to be an upset in part because while it's easy to see Brionna Jones' gaudy 71 percent field goal percentage, Walker-Kimbrough is almost equally efficient.

Megan Podkova, DePaul: 62.3 percent. More of a like-for-like guard comparison, teammate Chanise Jenkins also fits on this list. But Podkova's inside-outside production is one of the stories of the season. Shooting efficiency is only part of that story, but it's a good chapter.

Tyler Scaife, Rutgers: 58.7 percent. At least in terms of efficiency, Scaife ranks among the most improved players in the nation. A 41.7 effective field goal percentage a season ago was, well, bad. Her lines in wins against LSU and Minnesota the past two games underscore the change.

Katelynn Flaherty, Michigan: 54.7 percent. The Wolverines will be disappointed with an 0-2 Big Ten start, but the foundation is in place. Flaherty isn't just prolific in 21 points per game, she's efficient -- and getting better. Her effective field goal percentage as a freshman was 50 percent. -- Graham Hays

Through a narrow lens, Weisner's efficiency helps explain Oregon State's success. But it has implications beyond Corvallis, too, because it is evidence of a learned skill. She became an efficient scorer; she didn't arrive with it hard coded. She learned to play jazz, to use Rueck's example.

While her 3-point shot was always true, she needed a lot of total shots to lead the team in scoring at 12.5 points per game as a freshman. In both her case and many cases around the country, some of that can be born of necessity. She had to take bad shots because they still offered the best odds of producing points for a team still in the early stages of a complete rebuild under Rueck. But as Wiese arrived the following season, center Ruth Hamblin developed and the program improved, Weisner still played a similar way. It wasn't selfish -- scoring points seemed the best way she could help the team and 3-pointers and all-out drives seemed the best way to score. It just wasn't efficient.

She grasped that during time away with an injury late in her sophomore season.

"My freshman year, I forced a lot [of shots], even going into my sophomore year," Weisner said. "My freshman year, we didn't have a lot of scorers on our team. We were bad, and that's kind of what I had to do. I think once I broke my hand and the team started developing and we started winning games -- that was the first thing Coach told me when I came back: 'Be efficient, you don't have to force anything. Just let the game come to you.' From there on, I really feel like I built as a player, try not to force any shots and take what the game gives me."



As a freshman and sophomore, Weisner made 41 percent of her 2-point attempts. Over the past two seasons, through Jan. 1 of this year, she made 56 percent of those same shots.

Her 17.4 points per game this season come on just 1.9 more shots per game than she averaged as a sophomore.

She is better, but so are the shots she takes.

“She is much more comfortable putting it on the floor and getting to a good shot, where it was either [try to] finish at the rim or shoot a 3 previously,” Rueck said. “She has a midrange now that’s so good and that she knows how to get to now, where [previously] it was hard for her to get there and she didn’t believe in it.

“She’s a genius at the midrange. It’s crazy how well she scores at 12 to 15 feet. Yet when she came, she didn’t have that.”

It isn’t the sort of genius that means probabilities and percentages bounce around her brain every time she comes off a screen. It is the genius of making all the clockwork seem as uncomplicated as the simple act of throwing a ball toward a goal or a spear through the sky.

“I just like the way it soared through the air,” Weisner said of the appeal of the latter.

It applies equally to the former.



## From Oregon State fan to starting point guard, Katie McWilliams ready for first Civil War

Gina Mizell

The Oregonian/Oregon Live

January 7, 2016

CORVALLIS — Above a couch in Scott Rueck's Oregon State office hangs a giant photo of a rowdy men's basketball Civil War crowd at Gill Coliseum from the mid-2000s, a piece of memorabilia the coach has owned for years. Just to the left of the middle of the shot, a dad and an elementary-school-aged daughter wearing black shirts sit side-by-side.

Rueck quickly recognized Nick McWilliams, South Salem's girls basketball coach. Soon, he'd get to know the girl to Nick's left — a young Katie McWilliams, who is now a freshman guard for the 11th-ranked Beavers (10-3, 1-1 Pac-12).

It was a sheer coincidence that Nick and Katie McWilliams were captured in that particular shot. But it's not a huge surprise that they were in the crowd to begin with, as Katie grew up a Beavers fan and attended plenty of Civil War contests across a variety of sports.

This weekend, McWilliams will get her first taste of the rivalry with Oregon as a player in a big way, as she continues to fill in as the Beavers' starting point guard while all-Pac-12 performer Sydney Wiese nurses a right hand injury.

"I'm super excited," McWilliams said. "I know coming off a loss (to UCLA on Monday), too, we're super motivated to come into the Civil War ready to go and to attack the Ducks."

McWilliams, a former five-star prospect, has been learning plenty on the fly while being thrust into a big-time role during one of the toughest stretches of OSU's season.

Though she's always been a savvy distributor from the wing, McWilliams acknowledges point guard "wasn't really my main position — ever" before arriving at OSU. She spelled Wiese at times early in the season — particularly while Jen'Von'Ta Hill recovered from an early-season injury — but was never asked to hold the that job for extended minutes or in crunch time.

That changed just before Christmas, when McWilliams recorded nine assists in a blowout win against Cal Poly. Then in a road contest against No. 3 Notre Dame, she tallied seven points, three assists and just one turnover. She added two assists and one turnover against a strong USC defensive team to open Pac-12 play.

But in Monday's 71-51 defeat at UCLA, McWilliams committed seven turnovers while the Bruins' supreme athletes hounded her and teammates with pressure defense before the Beavers could even set up their offense.

Others took the blame for McWilliams' struggles. Senior center Ruth Hamblin said the Beavers' veterans "didn't necessarily protect her as well as we should have." Rueck added he "set her up for failure a couple times where I was trying to get her attention and calling this or that, where I should have just let her flow."

"Their pressure amped up the intensity to where she couldn't turn her head," Rueck said. "If it was Syd, she'd kind of just know what to do anyway. Katie is still needing instruction, especially under duress like that."

McWilliams, though, sees plenty of details she can fix herself. At 6-foot-2, she needs to get lower against smaller point guards in order to protect the ball. When she's ready to make a pass, she can't be off-balance. Trying to cross the ball over in front will likely lead to it getting swiped away.

Yet even while self-critiquing, McWilliams says she feels "way more comfortable" running the offense than she did three weeks ago. It also helps that Wiese is still around, offering to go over plays or help in any other way she can after practice or before games.

"It's just nice to have her as a role model, since she does this all the time," McWilliams said of Wiese. "It will be nice to have her back, but I'm just doing what I can."

McWilliams' immediate development continues against the Ducks, where she'll reunite with former high school and club opponents Lexi Bando and Odi Glidon. And playing such crucial minutes should benefit McWilliams down the road, as the Beavers push to make a deep run in March and then lose five seniors.

As for that giant photo in Rueck's office that coincidentally includes McWilliams? The coach said that will come down soon and will be replaced with a shot of one of the large home crowds his squad has drawn during its rise to national prominence.

McWilliams hopes Friday's game environment at Gill would be worthy of such a photo. That way, it could capture a Civil War contest in which she was on the floor, rather than in the stands.

"I've always wanted to play in the Civil War," McWilliams said.

**Katie McWilliams learning the college game****Gary Horowitz****Statesman Journal****January 7, 2016**

CORVALLIS – Playing on a veteran Oregon State women's basketball team that has made back-to-back NCAA tournament appearances, Katie McWilliams never expected to be counted on so heavily, so soon.

The freshman guard from South Salem High School has been up to the challenge.

A hand injury to junior point guard Sydney Wiese on Dec. 19 against Tennessee moved McWilliams into the starting lineup.

The 11th-ranked Beavers (10-3, 1-1) opened Pac-12 play in Los Angeles with a 57-49 victory Saturday at USC, followed by Monday's 71-51 loss at No. 15 UCLA.

"It was a long week in the education of Katie McWilliams and our group working with her as the (point guard)," OSU coach Scott Rueck said.

That education will continue Friday against Oregon (11-2, 0-2) at Gill Coliseum, followed by a Civil War rematch noon Sunday in Eugene. OSU has a nine-game winning streak in the rivalry.

The Beavers have split four games since Wiese's injury, and McWilliams has stepped into the point guard role with mostly positive results. In a 62-61 loss at No. 3 Notre Dame on Dec. 28, she scored seven points, dished out three assists, and committed just one turnover in 37 minutes.

But in the UCLA game, which was OSU's first 20-point loss in nearly two years, McWilliams had seven turnovers and one assist in 32 minutes. She also scored seven points, all in the first quarter.

UCLA, which Rueck called the "most athletic team" in the Pac-12, was led by guard Jordin Canada's 24 points. The Bruins applied full-court pressure for significant portions of the game and OSU had a season-high 26 turnovers.

"They were a great team to play against and they fought the whole way and never gave up," McWilliams said. "It was a great challenge and good for us to see a team like that so we know what we need to do to get the wins every night in the Pac-12."

OSU won its first Pac-12 championship last season with a 16-2 conference record, a mark that likely won't be duplicated by any conference team this season. Five Pac-12 teams are ranked in the top 25 this week.

The Beavers expect to be tested in every conference game, and for the short term at least, they will be without Wiese, a two-time first team all-Pac-12 selection. She is out indefinitely with an injury to her right non-shooting hand.

"We're just checking progress every week, praying (the medical staff) say it's a go," Rueck said. "I know she's dying to be out on the floor."

Ultimately, with the experience McWilliams is gaining at the point, OSU could be a stronger team when Wiese returns.

McWilliams has looked to Wiese for guidance.

"After practice and before games she asks me if I need help with running plays or whatever, and just telling me to stay positive and be aggressive," said McWilliams, adding "it will be nice to have her back. I'm just doing what I can."

At 6-foot-2, McWilliams has the size to play three positions. Before Wiese's injury, McWilliams received most of her playing time at the wing.

Considering that McWilliams didn't play much point guard in high school – McWilliams was a two-time, first-team all-state selection and helped South Salem win the 6A state championship last season — she's made impressive strides.

McWilliams had nine assists in her first career start Dec. 21 against Cal Poly.



"I mean, Katie's been holding her own for sure," said senior guard Jamie Weisner, the team's leading scorer. "But with cranked up pressure (at UCLA) and it's only her fourth start, you can't expect too much."

McWilliams is averaging 3.9 points, 1.8 rebounds and 1.8 assists. She is second on the team in blocked shots (11) behind senior center Ruth Hamblin, and is fifth in minutes played (23.5 per game).

#### STATESMAN JOURNAL

Beavers poised to repeat as Pac-12 champs

With proven scorers such as Weisner, Hamblin, Wiese and junior guard Gabby Hanson, McWilliams is primarily in pass-first mode. Ten of her 16 field goals are 3-pointers.

Rueck said a key offensively for the Beavers moving forward is McWilliams' "natural progression" at the point.

McWilliams is looking forward to the Civil War matchups. She played against Oregon guards Lexi Bando and Oti Gildon in high school.

"It's always been a big game and I've always come to a lot of Civil War games," McWilliams said. "I'm excited to get out there." McWilliams hopes Friday's game environment at Gill would be worthy of such a photo. That way, it could capture a Civil War contest in which she was on the floor, rather than in the stands.

"I've always wanted to play in the Civil War," McWilliams said.



## Building 'The Canadian Hammer': How Ruth Hamblin became a premier shot-blocker

Gina Mizell

Oregonian/Oregon Live

January 1, 2016

CCORVALLIS — About halfway through her freshman season, Ruth Hamblin and the rest of Oregon State's centers stood under the basket for a simple practice drill. A wave of guards drove toward them, and Hamblin had one job — block, block, block.

"Just getting all those reps," Hamblin recently recalled. "It really just kind of clicked and started the roll."

That "roll" meaning evolving into the nation's active leader in career blocks with 327 and the reigning Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year. And as the 10th-ranked Beavers begin their quest to repeat as Pac-12 champions this weekend, Hamblin, who's averaging 2.91 rejections per game this season, will remain a crucial component of a stout overall defense.

"That helps a lot," teammate Sydney Wiese said with a chuckle when asked about Hamblin's place in the Beavers' defense. "She cleans up our messes."

Hamblin did not become "The Canadian Hammer" — a nickname dished out by former Beavers star Joe Burton — solely because of her 6-foot-6 frame. Yes, that height makes the Houston, B.C., native physically imposing. Hamblin even acknowledges that she "got a lot of blocks in high school" simply because her stature dwarfed opponents.

When Hamblin arrived at OSU, however, she needed to learn how to block shots without fouling in the midst of a much faster and much more physical game.

Luckily, this is an area of expertise for Beavers coach Scott Rueck, whose system relies on a pure center surrounded by four shooters. Before Hamblin, El Sara Greer (114 blocks in 61 career games) and Patricia Bright (166 blocks in 62 career games) put themselves in the top 10 on OSU's all-time list in that category. Before that, Hannah Munger and Kristen Shielee dominated inside while Rueck built George Fox into a Division III power.

So while Hamblin's offensive game was initially raw — she had only started playing basketball in high school — Rueck zeroed in on how to immediately develop her into a defensive force.

"That is where we started with her," Rueck said. "On 'D' we (told her), 'We need you to be elite right away.' And she embraced it."

Added Hamblin: "It was something that I could pick up quickly while other things weren't necessarily clicking. That was one of the things that I was really able to grasp."

Much of Hamblin's shot-blocking work comes long before the game, thanks to meticulous film study and practice work against OSU's scout team. That's how she becomes a master anticipator while hovering near the basket, learning where the ball will go on specific plays and individual tendencies like if an opposing player floats shots over the top or scoops the ball up into the hoop.

Knowing those details then allows Hamblin to "close the window" between her and the ball and get in proper position to make the block.

"You have to be down in stance ready to go, because it's moving constantly and you need to know where to be quicker," Hamblin said. "It's about beating the ball to the spot."

Added Rueck: "The preparation part is what allows her to be so dominant. She just works hard, she knows what you want to do and she's gonna take that away for the most part. She's gonna make you become a perimeter player. Bottom line."

Then, once Hamblin gets into position, the next key is not fouling while swatting the ball away. That comes down to discipline, Rueck says — keeping her body away from the offensive player, keeping her hands above her head and not swinging her arm.

Instead, a quick flick of the wrist finishes off the block.

That technique led to big-time results in a breakout game as a sophomore against No. 2 Notre Dame in 2013, where she totaled nine blocks. A couple weeks later, she notched 10 against rival Oregon, which Hamblin calls her favorite block party at OSU. In her career, she's tallied three or more blocks in 57 games.

But after a rejection, does Hamblin do any talking?

"A couple of times I said, 'Get out of my house,'" Hamblin said, "but it was really quiet."

Putting the "Canadian" in The Canadian Hammer.

**Beavers face adversity with Wiese injury****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****December 23, 2015**

Two seasons ago, the Oregon State women's basketball team had to play without one of its leaders as Jamie Weisner missed the final nine games of the regular season with a wrist injury.

Weisner's absence meant other players had to elevate their performances to compensate for her loss on and off the floor.

They did, as the Beavers won all nine of those games and two more in the Pac-12 tournament, where Weisner slowly worked her way back into the rotation.

No. 11 Oregon State hopes for a similar outcome over the next few weeks as they will be without the services of junior point guard Sydney Wiese for an indefinite period of time, coach Scott Rueck announced after Monday's 80-43 home win against Cal Poly.

Wiese, a three-year starter, injured her right (non-shooting) hand during Saturday's home loss to No. 14 Tennessee. She had a cast on the hand Monday.

It is a blow for the Beavers, who head to No. 3 Notre Dame on Dec. 28, then open Pac-12 play Jan. 2 at USC and wrap up the trip at No. 19 UCLA on Jan. 4. Back-to-back Civil War games follow that.

Junior Gabby Hanson, who scored a game-high 19 points in the win over Cal Poly, remembers how the Beavers came together and weathered the loss of Weisner in the 2013-14 season.

Monday was a good start.

"I think everyone had the mindset to step up and hit shots and take care of business on the defensive end," Hanson said. "That was huge for us. It's a situation that most of us have been in before. I think everyone did that (Monday)."

Rueck believes this team can make it through this stretch.

"They have the confidence in knowing they're capable of surviving it and that they can step up because they've done it," he said. "Everybody did step up (Monday). It was really a collective effort and that doesn't surprise me because who they are."

Freshman Katie McWilliams, who started in Wiese's place, was happy to be a facilitator and dished out nine assists. She also had five rebounds to go with two points.

Hanson had 19 points, Weisner 16 and Marie Gulich 14. Deven Hunter chipped in nine and Ruth Hamblin added seven points and eight rebounds.

As a team, the Beavers had 21 assists on 27 made baskets.

The Beavers are off for a few days before returning to prepare for Notre Dame next week.

**Beavers building depth as season progresses****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****December 17, 2015**

Scott Rueck has had the opportunity the past couple games to experiment with his rotation.

Because of that, the coach of the No. 7 Oregon State women's basketball team has seen his bench players continue to grow, helping to make the Beavers an even more dangerous team.

The Beavers (8-0) hope that improved depth will play a key role this Saturday when they host No. 14 Tennessee at 6 p.m. in Gill Coliseum.

"I thought our depth grew up a lot today," Rueck said after the Beavers knocked off Cal State Bakersfield on Tuesday. The Beavers played 11 players at least seven minutes and each scored at least three points in a 75-51 win.

At one point in the fourth quarter, four reserves were on the floor as the Roadrunners cut a 30-point deficit to 18 with just under 4 minutes to play.

"They had to get their own traction. They had to battle a little," Rueck said. "It was neat to see that group just say hey, enough of this and everyone elevated their game."

Jamie Weisner played the most minutes at 27 and only six players saw more than 20 minutes of action.

That has made it harder on the opposition and has allowed for plenty of rest for the starters early in the season.

"I think it's just a strength that we have, like 1 through 12 any night anyone can score and it's just awesome to be able to have all five people on the floor as a threat," said senior center Ruth Hamblin. "It keeps the defense on their heels and we can just be really deep and cycle through so we never get tired because everyone is just going 100 percent when they are on the floor."

**Hunter shines**

Senior starting forward Deven Hunter had been held under double figures for six games before scoring 11 points in only 11 minutes on Tuesday. She hit 4 of 6 shots, including both 3-point attempts to match her season high for points.

Hunter, who averaged 7.3 points per game her first three seasons, entered Tuesday's game at just 4.7 this season.

Rueck said he loved what he saw out of Hunter on Tuesday.

"There are so many people who can shoot the ball and do things on this team sometimes it's easy to defer," he said. "It's easy to keep the ball moving and say, well, there's a better shot over there than maybe mine."

"That's been the case so far for Dev. She hasn't shot it from the perimeter quite like normal. She's done a little more inside, however, which I've enjoyed seeing. I've been waiting for that for four years, let's get that inside going and get comfortable with your back to the basket but not at the expense of her face-up and her 3-point shot. It was great to see that 3-point shot go down and she played really energized, good minutes for us (Tuesday)."

**Beavers building depth as season progresses****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****December 14, 2015**

Taylor Kalmer has been earning her stripes in her first season for the No. 7 Oregon State women's basketball team.

The 5-foot-7 freshman from Chandler, Arizona, was averaging just 5.6 minutes per game entering this past Saturday's home game against Idaho.

But her hard work in practice had not gone unnoticed. And when the Beavers needed a bit of a scoring spark in the second quarter, coach Scott Rueck knew just who to call on.

Kalmer played a career-best 13 minutes and scored 10 points — five each in the second and third quarters — on 4-for-6 shooting, including 2 for 2 from three. Those points helped the Beavers improve to 7-0 as they enter Tuesday's Beavers Beyond the Classroom game against Cal State Bakersfield at 11 a.m.

"She's earned everything she's gotten and I thought she was ready to go," Rueck said after Saturday's game. "It doesn't surprise me that she is where she's at. She proved in Italy right off the bat that she's fearless and she's a weapon. (Saturday) we were missing some shots and we needed a scorer — this kid can shoot the ball. She's been just grinding."

The biggest adjustment from high school to college has been on the defensive end. Not being a defensive liability is critical to playing for the Beavers, no matter how good of a scorer a player might be.

She held her own on Saturday.

"I think defensively is what I was focusing on the most," Kalmer said. "Of course it was cool to get the 10 points but I think I'm just focusing on defense and still working on that part."

It's been a bit of a baptism by fire for Kalmer as she usually goes up against Jamie Weisner, the Beavers' leading scorer, in practice.

"If you want to learn quickly how to play defense, guard Jamie every day and the way Jamie uses screens and all those things," Rueck said. "Taylor has really grown in that area and is growing quickly. We know what she can do on the offensive end, and even there her decision making has become better and better in taking care of the ball and (she is) learning our stuff."

Kalmer, who scored 18.7 points per game as a senior at Corona del Sol High, said she is in a good place for so early in her career.

"It was comfortable," she said of the expanded minutes Saturday. "I didn't feel too much pressure. We've been working hard in practices and outside of practices. So I was ready to go."



## Jamie Weisner growing as leader in her senior season

Gina Mizell

The Oregonian/Oregon Live

December 13, 2015

CORVALLIS — During each timeout, Scott Rueck briefly deliberates with his Oregon State assistant coaches, then turns to face his team.

And almost always, Jamie Weisner is sitting to Rueck's right, already looking across the huddle to offer words of motivation to her teammates.

That's an example of how Weisner, the No. 7 Beavers' All-Pac-12 guard, has continued to grow during a senior season that continues Saturday when OSU hosts Idaho. She's always been an example because her relentless competitiveness and success as a scorer and rebounder. She's evolved from a frenzied catch-and-shoot youngster into a veteran her coach says now makes "nothing but good decision after good decision."

Now, she's also speaking up more.

"Her voice has been much louder, and she brings the intensity to this group each day," coach Scott Rueck said. "If she doesn't see it from others, she will encourage them to get to her level, because she knows that's what it takes."

This step in Weisner's development first hatched last spring, when she showed up in Rueck's office a couple days after Gonzaga upset the Beavers in the NCAA Tournament's second round.

"I'm not going out like this," Weisner told her coach. "Tell me what I need to do differently."

From then on, constant conversations began between Weisner and Rueck about how to start filling the vocal leadership role that would soon be vacated by departing senior Ali Gibson.

Weisner started to view herself through teammates' eyes, realizing her place on the team means the attitude she brings to the gym each day impacts the entire group. Around once a week in practice, Weisner estimates, she pulls a teammate aside to hold them accountable. She's already become a mentor of sorts to freshman guard Taylor Kalmer, working extra with her outside of practice. And if she senses somebody is having a bad day, she'll reach out to offer support.

"I wouldn't have felt comfortable doing it in the past," Weisner said. "I don't break down the whole practice or anything. I'll come up to somebody and say, 'Hey, I think you should do this,' or, 'Come on, you need to get that rebound.' Just little stuff like that."

"I'm not really a 'rah-rah' type of person, so it's just more usually 1-on-1 with people."

Added Beavers point guard Sydney Wiese: "When she does say something, as a team, you're going to listen to her, because she's proving herself every single possession. She goes all out every possession. What better leader to have than someone who works harder than anybody? And that's Jamie. She's always had that work ethic and leading by example, but now she's been speaking up a lot more and she always has great things to say."

It's also easy for Weisner to command respect when she continues to morph into one of the nation's premier guards.

She ranks second in the Pac-12 and 19th nationally in scoring (21.2 points per game), third in the league field-goal percentage (59) and fifth in 3-point field-goal percentage (46.9). She's gotten more comfortable driving either direction to the basket, as evidenced in the Beavers' come-from-behind victory at Marquette when she scored a game-high 26 points but did not connect on an attempt from beyond the arc. She remains a savvy rebounder for her size (she pulled down 10 against Marquette), while her position defense and awareness on that end of the floor has improved immensely.

And during timeouts, Weisner will continue to take her spot to Rueck's right.

"She's not settling, and that's evident," Rueck said. "If we're not on our 'A' game, they're hearing from Jamie."

**Sydney Wiese quietly becomes impressive rebounder****Gina Mizell****The Oregonian/Oregon Live****December 11, 2015**

CORVALLIS — Sometimes, Scott Rueck does not even notice how many times point guard Sydney Wiese has crashed the boards in a game until reviewing the film.

“It’s pretty quiet, because she just scoops in,” the Oregon State coach said of his point guard. “Every once in a while, you’ll see this player come out of nowhere and rip the ball up by the net.”

Under the radar or not, it’s been an unexpected development for Wiese in the early season. Through six games, she’s tied for eighth in the Pac-12 with 8.3 rebounds per contest — the same figure as 6-foot-6 teammate Ruth Hamblin.

That number is a huge increase for Wiese, who averaged 3.3 rebounds per game as a freshman and 2.5 as a sophomore. Though her 6-foot-1 frame has perhaps always been a potential asset as a rebounder, Wiese’s primary role for the Beavers has been as a deadly 3-point shooting (she’s already the program’s all-time leader in that category) and distributor.

Rueck estimates that Wiese’s time with Team USA at the World University Games — where she was primarily a reserve shooting guard, rather than the top ball-handler — likely contributed to her increased emphasis on rebounding.

Now, perhaps the only person “negatively” impacted by Wiese’s rebounding from the perimeter is teammate Jamie Weisner, who has been one of the top rebounding guards in the Pac-12 throughout her career. These days, Weisner’s 4.7 boards per game is a slight dip from her 5.8 career average.

“Jamie’s numbers are down, because Syd’s getting them,” Rueck said with a laugh.

**Weisner in a groove offensively****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****December 9, 2015**

Jamie Weisner entered last Thursday's game at Marquette hitting 60 percent of her 3-point attempts through the season's first five games.

But Weisner, No. 7 Oregon State's senior sharpshooter and leading scorer, for some reason couldn't find the range against the quick and aggressive Golden Eagles.

She missed all seven of her attempts.

Earlier in her career, that may have led to a bit of frustration for Weisner.

But last Thursday, she wasn't fazed.

"Of course I was pretty disappointed I didn't make one, especially since I shot seven," Weisner said on Tuesday. "But in the game, I've just got to keep playing through it and my dad always tells me shooters never think so I just try to put that in the back of my mind and just keep producing."

Weisner found other ways to put up the points the Beavers desperately needed in a game they had to rally from 10 down in the third quarter.

She finished with a season-high tying 26 points — just one off her career high — as she hit 11 of 16 shots inside the arc. And the Beavers moved to 6-0 with a 65-58 win.

Weisner scored 14 of her points in the paint, and had a key rebound and basket off a missed free throw in the third quarter, a play in which she was fouled and made the free throw to get OSU within 42-36.

"I thought they closed pretty hard on her to challenge 3-point shots which turned her into a driver," coach Scott Rueck said. "A couple years ago her head would have gone done, she would have gotten herself in trouble."

Weisner, who entered the season averaging 13 points per game for her career, is up to 21.2 per contest this year. She has scored 26 in each of her last two games and has surpassed 20 points for times.

For the season, Weisner is shooting 59 percent (46 for 78) from the floor to rank in the top 25 in the country in that category through Tuesday's games. She has hit nearly 47 percent of her 3s (15 for 32) and is 20 for 21 from the foul line (95.2 percent), No. 4 in the country through Tuesday.

Part of the reason for the increase in scoring on a team that has plenty of players capable of contributing offensively is a sense of urgency for Weisner.

"As a senior, I don't want any games to go to waste so I'm just trying to fulfill every minute I'm on the court and make the most of it," she said.

Another reason is her maturity and growth when it comes to shot selection and a comfort within the offense after three-plus years.

"I definitely think I also have the mentality that if I'm not making 3s then I'm going to have to get my points somehow," she said. "I don't have to but I feel like that's what my team needs and I'm going to go get them at the basket or try to get fouled. I definitely think that comes with experience and that's something I didn't have two years ago."

Rueck said Weisner's decision making has steadily improved.

"She's so comfortable putting the ball on the floor now where it used to be shoot it before you dribble it," Rueck said. "Now it's what the defense is giving me, I'm going to take it."

Her ability to drive and hit the outside or mid-range shots has made her even more difficult to guard.

"It keeps the defense guessing," senior center Ruth Hamblin said. "They can't just close out hard to her because she can go by them and is very dynamic in that so I think that's great."

**Hamblin comes up big for OSU women's basketball team****Gary Horowitz****Statesman Journal****December 4, 2015**

As an elite women's basketball program, No. 7 Oregon State figures to get every opponent's best shot.

And that's exactly what happened Thursday in a 65-58 victory at Marquette.

The Beavers (6-0) trailed by as much as 10 points in the third quarter before their lock-down defense, combined with the play of senior center Ruth Hamblin (17 points, career-high 17 rebounds, seven blocks) and senior guard Jamie Weisner (26 points, 10 rebounds), helped OSU avert an upset.

Marquette (2-5) starts three freshmen, but the youthful Golden Eagles gave OSU all it could handle. OSU, led by the 6-foot-6 Hamblin, is one of the tallest teams in the nation. But the Beavers had trouble with Marquette's quickness for most of the game.

Ultimately, OSU had too much size and experience for the Golden Eagles. Hamblin was dominant in the second half and changed the complexion of the game.

The Beavers received a big lift from freshman guard Katie McWilliams from South Salem High School, who played a season-high 29 minutes and hit a key 3-pointer down the stretch.

OSU's most effective lineup against Marquette was Hamblin, Weisner, junior guards Sydney Wiese and Gabby Hanson, and McWilliams, who had six points, two blocks and one assist. Surrounding Hamblin with four guards is an intriguing combination, and don't be surprised to see coach Scott Rueck use it more often as the season progresses.

The Beavers had an alarming 19 turnovers, and that will need to improve in marquee matchups against No. 8 Tennessee (Dec. 19) and No. 3 Notre Dame (Dec. 28) and in a strong Pac-12 that includes four teams ranked in the Top 25.

**Oregon State women's basketball navigating hectic travel schedule during nonconference play****Gina Mizell****The Oregonian/Oregon Live****December 2, 2015**

CORVALLIS — About a week ago, the Oregon State women's basketball team caught a 3 a.m. bus to the airport to travel to Puerto Rico. On Wednesday, the Beavers held an early-morning workout before departing for Milwaukee.

The No. 7 Beavers have yet to reach the meat of their nonconference schedule — that comes later this month with a visit from eighth-ranked Tennessee and a trip to No. 3 Notre Dame. Yet OSU is in the midst of arguably its most demanding travel stretch of the regular season, with Thursday's matchup at Marquette on tap after spending Thanksgiving weekend at the San Juan Tournament.

"Oh, absolutely. For sure," said junior guard Gabby Hanson when asked about the hectic schedule. "I don't think we've ever done anything like this before. But we like to experience new things, and I'm pretty sure there's tons of other teams that are doing the exact same thing as us.

"So we just have to just (take it) one day at a time."

The Beavers are now 5-0 in the early season, following two victories in Puerto Rico against Hofstra and Arkansas. Coach Scott Rueck praised how his team handled its first real challenge of the season, particularly against an athletic Arkansas squad that made the NCAA Tournament a season ago. The Beavers began the fourth quarter up 45-42, before an 18-3 run helped push that advantage to as many as 18 points in the game's final 10 minutes.

"This is a new team. This is a new season," Rueck said. "Everybody wants to put them together, but last year was last year. This is new. I told them I was proud of them for the way they responded to adversity in that game ...

"That was a championship-level performance right there (in the fourth quarter). So that was great for us to see, and I think that just builds confidence going forward."

Rueck calls Marquette a "fascinating" team, because eight of the 11 players on the roster are freshmen. Though the Beavers hold a clear size advantage — no Marquette player stands taller than 6-foot-3 — the Golden Eagles have interchangeable parts offensively that can all shoot the 3-pointer and handle the basketball. That was evident in Marquette's first two victories of the season, where the Golden Eagles dropped 98 and 95 points, respectively, on Florida International and Richmond in the FIU Thanksgiving Tournament.

"To see this team just grow up before their eyes and get more and more confident (is interesting)," Rueck said of watching Marquette on film. "I see the makings of a very good team over the next few years. This is a team that, they're scary."

After the matchup with Marquette, the Beavers are off for more than a week for finals before hosting Idaho on Dec. 12.

Maybe then they'll get some rest following arguably the most demanding travel stretch of the regular season.

**Hanson fitting in fine as a starter****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****December 2, 2015**

For the past two seasons, Gabby Hanson has been able to sit back and watch the first few minutes of each game unfold before checking in for the Oregon State women's basketball team.

It was a role Hanson excelled at, providing a spark off the bench.

But when four-year starter Ali Gibson's eligibility was done at the end of last season, the Beavers were looking for someone to fill her role.

The natural progression was for Hanson, also a guard, to step up.

And step up is what Hanson has done the first five games of the season for the No. 7 Beavers (5-0), who head back on the road for Thursday's nonconference game against Marquette (2-4) at 4 p.m. The game will be televised on Fox Sports 1.

While Hanson has embraced her new starting position, she is happy to do whatever it takes to help the team have success.

"As long as I'm on the floor I'm great with it. I just want to be on the floor and I want to play," Hanson said. "I think my mindset as a starter is just to make sure that from the first moment, the first second, we're doing everything right."

That has been the biggest adjustment for Hanson, who is averaging 8 points per game and has twice scored in double figures.

"There's no time to really feel out the game," she said of being a starter. "When you're sitting on the bench you can kind of watch everything that happens and kind of see how the flow of the game is going. When you're starting you're in it right way."

Coach Scott Rueck said Hanson has filled the starting role just fine.

"If anything, I've seen more consistency from her because we need it," he said. "That is a bigger role and she can't defer to anyone, it's on her and she's risen to the challenge. She's been successful in what she's always done which is playing great defense and then really sparked us offensively. She's shot the ball inside and out well. I like what she's brought."

It's not as if she wasn't a key contributor her first two seasons, it's just that now she has a different role.

"Gabby played a lot of huge minutes for us, a lot of big minutes over the past two years," Rueck said. "So I don't necessarily see that it's a huge deal, and I don't feel like it's a huge deal to her either. It feels like a natural progression for her."

But with Hanson stepping into the starting role, now the question becomes: Who's the next Gabby Hanson?

While Hanson was typically the first player off the bench last season, the Beavers could go with different players depending on the opponent. Senior Samantha Siegner, sophomore Marie Gulich and freshman Katie McWilliams have been the first to come off the bench so far.

**Beavers staying in the moment****Gary Horowitz****Statesman Journal****December 2, 2015**

The Oregon State women's basketball team will be tested soon.

It might even happen Thursday at Marquette. But a game that continues to generate buzz is No. 7 OSU vs. No. 8 Tennessee on Dec. 19 at Gill Coliseum in Corvallis.

It's not as if the Beavers (5-0) are looking ahead, but they've won every game so far by at least 16 points.

After Tuesday's practice, junior guard Gabby Hanson said the focus is on Marquette, but excitement is building for the Tennessee game, which will be a matchup of two teams with Final Four aspirations.

"I woke up this morning, I said '18 days till Tennessee,'" Hanson said, adding "every game is one focus, but obviously that is a big game on our schedule."

Senior forward Samantha Siegner said there is no concern about OSU looking past any opponent.

"We've got our eyes on Marquette," Siegner said. "I know there's a lot of buzz (about the Tennessee game). You hear a lot of people talking about it. We'll be looking forward to it when the time comes."

Weisner leads No. 7 Oregon State women past Arkansas

The same could be said about a Dec. 28 game at No. 3 Notre Dame.

The Beavers, who are ranked No. 7 in the Associated Press poll, are a well-traveled team.

In addition to the international tour of Italy this summer, OSU spent Thanksgiving in Puerto Rico for the San Juan Shootout where they defeated Hofstra and Arkansas. The Beavers are coming off a 63-47 victory over Arkansas, but it was a three-point game entering the fourth quarter.

"I thought we handled adversity well and we did face some," coach Scott Rueck said. "Both teams that we played caused some trouble during segments of each game. The majority of each game we were in control!"

Marquette (2-4) of the Big East is a young team that finished 9-22 last season. OSU, which won its first Pac-12 championship last season and won a school-record 27 games, is a veteran squad with three seniors and two juniors in the starting lineup.

The Beavers, led by 6-foot-6 senior center Ruth Hamblin, are among the tallest teams in the nation and have dominated the boards so far this season. They also have excellent depth.

"I think we have weapons everywhere on the court this year from all five positions," said senior guard Jamie Weisner, who is averaging a team-high 20.2 points per game. "When people come off the bench, they're weapons, too."

Wiese and Weisner lead No. 7 Oregon State in rout of Hofstra

In addition to Weisner, sophomore guard Sydney Wiese (13.8 ppg) and Hamblin (12.6 ppg) are averaging in double figures.

The Beavers will be home for the first time in nearly three weeks Dec. 12 against Idaho.

"I'm biased, but I feel we have the best fans in the nation," Weisner said. "They're with us every step of the way!"

**Scott Rueck a 'huge fan' of new quarter system in women's basketball****Gina Mizell****The Oregonian/Oregon Live****December 2, 2015**

CORVALLIS — When evaluating his team's performance against Arkansas at the San Juan Tournament in Puerto Rico, Scott Rueck referred to the stretch when Oregon State quickly turned a slim 3-point advantage into a comfortable 18-point lead over the contest's final 10 minutes.

"We were on our heels a little bit in that third quarter, which we hadn't felt yet this year, especially that late in a game," Rueck said. "And then be composed and come out 18-3 to start the fourth quarter ... We did not play championship-level in the third, we did in the fourth."

Quarter. That terminology for a college basketball game might still feel a bit strange to outsiders, after the women's game switched from two 20-minute halves during the offseason. But after five games in the new format, Rueck said he and the seventh-ranked Beavers "love" the quarter system.

"It compartmentalizes the game just a little bit more," Rueck said. "Everybody has been a huge fan of it. I haven't heard one negative response."

The only noticeable difference, Rueck said, is there are two fewer media timeouts per game, which used to come at the 16-, 8-, and 4-minute marks of each half.

Unofficially, Rueck previously used to use the phrase "fourth quarter" to describe the magnitude of the last 10 minutes of a game. Now, that terminology is official — and can spark big runs like the one the Beavers made to overpower Arkansas down the stretch last week.

"It's cool to emphasize that segment of the game and to be able to refer to it in that way," Rueck said. "Now, it's accurate to say, 'Hey, it's fourth quarter. It's finishing time.'"

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## Hamblin Rockets into Stardom

Steve Gress

Corvallis Gazette Times

November 20, 2015

CORVALLIS — It was a month into her sophomore season in 2012 at Oregon State, and Ruth Hamblin was struggling with her game.

Coach Scott Rueck could see that Hamblin, his 6-foot-6 post, had lost some of her confidence. She was pressing. Her shots weren't falling.

Rueck came up with an unusual solution. He rarely tells a player not to shoot. But in this case, that's exactly what he did.

"If you can't touch the backboard, don't shoot," he told her as the team prepared for a tournament in Las Vegas that year.

Instead, he wanted Hamblin to focus on continuing to play defense and impact the game at that end of the floor. The thinking was that there would be time to work out the kinks on the offensive part later.

Then came a showdown in Gill Coliseum with No. 2 Notre Dame.

The Beavers weren't expected to hang with such an elite program — and nobody anticipated much out of Hamblin, who was starting just her 12th game for the Beavers and was still raw in terms of her development as a Division I player.

But that was the game when something clicked.

While Oregon State ultimately faded down the stretch — Notre Dame scored the final eight points of the game for a 70-58 win — it was a coming-out party for not just the team as a whole, but just as much for Hamblin. She finished with 12 points, eight rebounds and nine blocked shots.

After the game, Rueck said: "Ruth became a big-time player today and proved to herself she can play against anybody, and maybe it's not as hard as she thought."

Hamblin backed up Rueck's assessment just a few games later in an outing against Oregon: She notched the school's third triple-double and first in 30 years. Hamblin scored 23 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and blocked 10 shots. Two nights earlier, also against Oregon, Hamblin had 27 points, 16 rebounds and five blocks.

It was the beginning of Hamblin's emergence as one of the top post players not only in the Pac-12, but all of women's collegiate basketball.

## Choosing Oregon State

Rueck may have had a bit of déjà vu the first time he saw Hamblin on the basketball court.

While scouting games at the End of the Trail AAU tournament at Oregon City, the first thing that caught Rueck's eye was Hamblin's height. Then her jersey number — 20.

The two reminded Oregon State's then-second-year coach of a former player of his back at his previous coaching job, George Fox.

Kristen Shielee was a 6-4 post who didn't play much until her senior season for Rueck. But what a senior year it turned out to be: She helped lead a young Bruins team to a Division III national title while earning Final Four MVP honors.

Rueck saw the raw potential Hamblin possessed. It reminded him of Shielee.

"I knew this was a player that I knew what to do with," Rueck said. "If we were to get her, I knew how to use her, that she would flourish in our system."

He made contact and set up a phone interview with her and her dad, Lance, for Aug. 8, 2011.

That call lasted all of 45 minutes, but Rueck knew it had gone well.



"I could tell they were looking for what we are and we were looking for her," he said.

So Rueck asked Lance if he wanted to talk to a parent of a recent recruit and gave him the phone number for Darcy Weisner's number.

Darcy's daughter, Jaimie, had committed to the Beavers a few days earlier.

An hour later, Lance called Rueck and cut quickly to the chase: Was there was a scholarship offer on the table?

Rueck and his staff had yet to hold that discussion, but he knew the answer: "I said, 'Yes, there's an offer.'"

"A lot of times when you know, you just know," Rueck said. "And you find a lot of common threads with people. And you have a feeling. All recruiters go off that."

### **A love of horses**

Basketball had never been No. 1 in Ruth Hamblin's life. Growing up on a farm in the small town of Houston, British Columbia, Hamblin experienced a simple life and loved every minute of it.

"I would say I had one of the best childhoods I could have asked for," Hamblin said. "You just learn so many valuable life skills growing up on the farm, just from taking care of the land to hard work. ... You just kind of learn who you are at a young age. You have a greater understanding of how the world works."

She fell in love with horses, and that love eventually forced her to make a tough decision.

"I had to choose one and my life was going to split down these two different roads," she said. "... I think I realized I could choose basketball and still keep horses. Obviously it's been hard the past four years with school and stuff, (but) I know there are horses in my future and it will come back one day."

### **A leap of faith**

Faith is and always has been a major influence in Hamblin's life. When she made the decision to play at Oregon State, despite moving away from her comfort zone and stepping into a higher level of competition, Hamblin felt at peace with her choice almost immediately.

It has turned out better than she ever imagined.

"To just see how that's unfolded, the relationships I've build with my teammates and the relationships with all the students around here, it's been amazing," Hamblin said. "I couldn't have done it without my faith.

"There's days (where she thinks) I can't do this, Lord, why am I here? How did I get here? But He definitely lifts you up in that regard and that's amazing to feel his presence in those hard moments. And also to feel his presence in the happy moments, the highlights, cutting down the net for the Pac-12 championship. Getting an A in that hard class you were dying in.

"I think the thing I have learned the most is still clinging to Him in the seasons that are good because it's so easy to forget."

### **Quite the experience**

Hamblin has worked diligently to turn herself into one of the top players in the country. She entered her senior campaign averaging 9.1 points, 8.6 rebounds and 3.1 blocks per game for her career. She was shooting 56 percent from the floor and has become a face of the program.

The numbers don't necessarily stand out but that's a product of the system and the talent around her.

It wasn't always easy.

"As a basketball player, the growth is just crazy," Hamblin said. "It's almost a completely different game. It's like I came to play a new sport here. But it's been an amazing journey. I think I learned the type of perseverance it takes to compete at this level and to come in every day with the right mindset and want to become your best. I think that's been an amazing growth journey and that's obviously applied to me as a basketball player and me as a person."



In addition to all the success she has found on the court so far — and there may be more to come this season — it's away from the court where Hamblin has also grown as much, if not more.

An engineering major, Hamblin discovered she has a new passion — rocket science. She became involved in the ESRA — Experimental Sounding Rocket Association — program at Oregon State last year and is helping to build a sounding rocket.

A sounding rocket, or research rocket, is designed to take measurements and perform scientific experiments during a suborbital flight.

She has no idea how that will translate into a career, but it's just another example reaffirming she made the right decision to attend Oregon State and to turn her focus to basketball.

“That makes me happier than anything on the court,” Rueck said. “You use the game to set yourself up for life. That's really what's happened. You have this opportunity to find a niche as a teammate, find a niche as a player, find a niche as to how you're going to operate from a professional standpoint within our program.”

Rueck described Hamblin as the “perfect example” of what he hopes all his players get out of their time at Oregon State.

“Oregon State's certainly benefited from Ruth and Ruth's benefited from Oregon State.”

### **Leaving an impression**

Hamblin has found plenty of success in her three-plus years at OSU.

She has become one of the top players not only in the Pac-12 Conference, where she was named the defensive player of the year last year, but also on a national level as she was a third-team All-America last year.

Rueck said she's earned every one of the accolades.

“You never truly know exactly how it's going to go,” he said. “But when you put the character of who this person is and their coachability and their passion for the game, I think that's the one thing I didn't know. I felt we could help her learn the game and that would allow her to be successful. I expected success, but there's no way to predict how much work someone will do on their own.”

“She's earned everything she's gotten. She's taken advantage of every opportunity and every resource and made herself an elite player.

You can't predict that part of it so, yeah, she's done everything that anyone would dream of, really.”

Looking back, it all began on that Sunday afternoon against Notre Dame.

Hamblin didn't show any fear on that day. She just played the game, and began to realize that she did belong.

“You just shake your head looking back on that moment,” Rueck said. “But from that moment forward she saw herself differently and I was so grateful for that.”

Hamblin is also grateful for her time in the program and at Oregon State.

So how would Hamblin like to be remembered?

Like her life growing up on the farm, it's pretty simple.

“A really sweet girl who played really hard on the floor and didn't leave anything to question,” she said. Mission accomplished.

**Beaver senior class part of unprecedented success**

**Gary Horowitz**  
**Statesman Journal**  
**November 12, 2015**

CORVALLIS – There is talk of the Oregon State women's basketball team raising another Pac-12 championship banner into the rafters at Gill Coliseum, and making an extended run in the NCAA tournament.

Oh, how times have changed.

When seniors Ruth Hamblin, Deven Hunter, Samantha Siegner and Jamie Weisner were freshmen, the Beavers finished 10-21 and won four Pac-12 games.

The program has taken off since then.

OSU won a school-record 27 games last season, went 16-2 in Pac-12 play and garnered the school's first conference championship, made a second consecutive appearance in the NCAA tournament, and led the conference in attendance at more than 4,000 fans per game.

"I can't even tell you what it was like from the first year to this year, it's like a world's difference," said Siegner, a 6-foot-3 forward from West Albany High School. "It's been extremely fun to be part of and watch it grow."

The Beavers, who open the 2015-16 campaign Friday at home against Longwood, are ranked No. 10 in the Associated Press preseason poll. They were picked by the Pac-12 coaches to repeat as conference champions.

Hunter, a 6-3 forward from McNary High, said the Beavers do not take success for granted.

"It helped us out not starting at the top," Hunter said. "We almost humbled ourselves, like we knew where we started and where we had to go. We've worked hard for this."

A second-round loss to Gonzaga in the NCAA tournament last March was the final game for senior guard Ali Gibson, a cornerstone of OSU's rise to prominence. She is the only starter missing from last season's squad.

Sometime in late March, or perhaps early April if the Beavers make it to the Final Four, sixth-year coach Scott Rueck will reflect on a senior class that has helped elevate the program to unprecedented heights.

"I'm sad. I'm excited for 'em. It's all those things," Rueck said. "They're an incredible group. They believed in us when there was not much to believe in other than a vision, and they've made that vision a reality."

Hamblin, a 6-6 center from Houston, British Columbia, who is often referred to as "The Canadian Hammer," was the consensus Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year last season, and the Pac-12 media player of the year.

Weisner, a 5-10 guard from Clarkston, Washington, joined Hamblin and junior guard Sydney Wiese as a first team all-Pac-12 selections.

Hunter, who has started 68 consecutive games since her freshman season, is the unofficial team leader in floor burns because of her hustle. Siegner and senior guard Jev'Von'Ta Hill, a transfer from Hutchinson Community College who is her second season at OSU, are key reserves.

"I know it's my last year, so you have to put it all of the table and not leave anything," Hunter said.

OSU got a jump-start on the season with an international tour to Italy this summer, where they won all four of their games against women's professional teams.

In addition to returning nine of the top 10 scorers, OSU has a highly regarded freshmen class led by five-star recruit Katie McWilliams, a 6-2 guard from South Salem High who helped lead the Saxons to the 6A state championship last season.

There is plenty of competition for playing time.



"I know that I appreciate having the talent we have in here because it keeps everyone honest so to speak," Siegner said. "You have to work your butt off every day."

OSU will be tested before conference play with a Dec. 19 home game against No. 4 Tennessee, and a Dec. 28 at No. 3 Notre Dame.

This is the first time in 16 years that Stanford was not picked to win the Pac-12 in the preseason media poll. The Cardinal is ranked No. 16 in the AP preseason poll, one spot behind Arizona State.

For all of the success last season the Beavers faded down the stretch, losing three of their last five games, including the NCAA tournament loss to Gonzaga at Gill Coliseum as a No. 3 seed.

"The way the year ended, this is a hungry group," Rueck said.

And everyone wants the seniors to go out in style.

The goal is for OSU's season to culminate with a berth in the Final Four in Indianapolis. The pieces are in place to get there.

"We have to make the most of their senior years and make the most of our time left together," Wiese said.



## How Ruth Hamblin became perhaps the best pure center in college

Graham Hays

espnW

Nov. 4, 2015

CORVALLIS, Ore. -- Asked which chores ranked as least desirable growing up on a cattle ranch in northern British Columbia, Ruth Hamblin struggled for a moment. Sure, cleaning out the barn, which meant lifting heavy manure in dark confines, wasn't exactly fun. Using a tractor to move feeders? That was always hard work. But chores are chores. Before and after school, the sun in both cases an infrequent companion for many months, they needed to get done. So she did them well.

Her hesitation hinted there wasn't much point in thinking about which ones would be nice to avoid.

It was only then that she remembered the hay bales. The cattle still needed to be fed during the long winters, so one of the chores was to free the hay wrapped in plastic layers. Except you can't just unwrap bales when the temperature hasn't climbed above freezing in weeks. You chisel through ice and the frozen covering.

"Basically you're an archaeologist in there trying to find the way," Hamblin lamented.

She prefaced the story with the sort of rueful laugh born of sudden recollection of past misery.

It was the sort of laugh, then, that is easy to imagine Pac-12 opponents offering years from now if pressed to name the basketball chore best avoided at all costs. At least the arenas in which Hamblin tests their willpower throughout the winter months are climate-controlled.

Hamblin came to basketball as an afterthought. Her loyalties even now are divided between defensive and orbital rotations, basketball balanced with engineering studies. None of that matters. If something needs to be done, it needs to be done to the best of her ability.

And the best of her abilities is better than any other center in college basketball. The 6-foot-6 reigning Pac-12 Player of the Year is literally the biggest reason Oregon State has a chance to follow the program's first conference title a season ago with a first Final Four appearance this time around.

"Ruth is someone who is going to bring excellence to whatever she does," Oregon State coach Scott Rueck said. "I've said she is the most efficient person I know, and I believe that. She gets more done in a day than anybody else I know because she can do so many different things.

"I think that's her background growing up on the farm and having a blue-collar background."

Most college basketball stars made a habit of playing H-O-R-S-E in their younger years. Hamblin rode one when she got home from school in Houston, British Columbia. Situated 12 hours north of Vancouver and a little more than a hundred miles as the crow flies from the Alaskan border, Houston is a town of a few thousand people that exists mostly because of the resources that surround it, from mining and forestry to the steelhead that brings tourists.

Oregon

Ruth Hamblin and the Beavers were a No. 3 seed in last season's NCAA tournament, losing in the second round.

It wasn't until ninth grade, after a brief and unsatisfying foray a year earlier, that Hamblin even played basketball. The easily envisioned story of a tall kid uncomfortable and awkward in her body doesn't quite work here. Years of riding and physical labor on the farm allowed her to grow comfortably into her frame. (Even now, as if aware of the easy stereotypes for a tall female who picked up the game late, Rueck goes out of his way to note her agility and athleticism.) But just because she didn't trip over her own feet didn't make her any less raw on the court.

By the 11th grade, when her future coach first saw her, she was on a provincial team comprised of some of the best talent British Columbia had to offer. Rueck won a national title at Division III George Fox with a team built around a 6-4 center who arrived at that school as a project. So even though Hamblin came off the bench behind younger, more polished players, Rueck liked what he saw. He also liked what he heard about Hamblin's commute. For weeks on-end she missed school on Fridays so that she and her dad could drive the 12 hours to Vancouver to practice with the provincial team. Come Sunday evening, they would make the return drive, arriving home just in time for her to get to school Monday morning.

"There's a level of commitment there," Rueck said. "That's a very mature perspective and a person that has a great desire."

It was conscious commitment. It's tempting to wonder if one of the best players in the country might have slipped completely through the cracks if not for a coach from the University of Northern British Columbia encouraged her to try out for the provincial team. But Oregon State and the rest of college basketball almost proceeded blissfully unaware of the potential star anyway. As the sport became



more than just another of her activities at a school with a graduating class of 10 people, she wondered if it was what she really wanted to do. Instead of trying out for the provincial team in 10th grade, a year before Rueck saw her, she thought about giving up basketball entirely.

“When this all started happening, I got super overwhelmed with it,” Hamblin said. “I had my life planned out -- I was going to go be a vet and all this stuff, and I never had considered this. Now it was like the next 10 years of my life could possibly [be committed to basketball]. I’m an all-in or all-out type of person, so if I was going to play basketball, I was going to play basketball.”

She changed her mind about quitting and asked her dad to make one of those long drives so she could try out.

That unwillingness to compromise standards is only underscored by her academic path. There aren’t many engineering majors on Top 25 rosters, the demands of one difficult to square with the demands of the other. Yet she earned academic All-America honors in addition to those of the basketball variety a season ago, her focus these days in aerospace engineering. There are times, guard Sydney Wiese noted, when teammates will ask in mock exasperation if Hamblin can just stop for a moment and come to the movies. But they understand.

“If she needs help [with school] -- we wouldn’t be able to help her,” Wiese deadpanned. “But if she needs help getting some place, like a ride, or whatever she needs, we’ll be there for her.”

All that’s left is to convince someone who builds rockets that basketball isn’t rocket science.

“The thing that we’ve had to do with her is to simplify things because she wants it to be a calculus problem when we’re just dealing with addition here,” Rueck said. “It’s not as hard as she wants to make it sometimes -- it’s maybe just monotonous, in that you have to do the same skill over and over and over until you perfect it and grow your confidence.”

The result is a player that few teams in the country can counter. From the NBA down, basketball is in the midst of an infatuation, some would say evolution, that centers on playing without, well, a center. Small ball is all the rage. Back-to-the-basket posts are rumored to be all but extinct.

His own team bolstered this season by 6-5 Georgetown transfer Natalie Butler, Connecticut coach Geno Auriemma spoke recently about how the look of the sport has changed.

“Everybody had a 6-5 kid who could really play,” Auriemma told the Hartford Courant of years past. “Now, those players don’t exist, so if you have one, you have something nobody else has.”

For Oregon State, that’s someone who ranked sixth in the nation in blocks a season ago while averaging barely two fouls per game. She alters outcomes solely with her defensive presence. But the team’s perimeter-oriented offense, which attempted 719 3-pointers and ranked in the top 10 percent of Division I in scoring, also works in part because of the one person in the middle.

“Defensively, I believe she has caught up [from her late start], and I believe she’s as good as anyone anywhere in timing, angles, discipline, anticipation,” Rueck said. “Offensively I think she has a ways to go in terms of her feel for the game. That only comes with time. That’s ahead of her. ...

“I believe she’s still playing catch-up [offensively], which is scary and exciting, both, because it means the sky is the limit for her.”

Except that if someone whose dream job is working on a project like the Hubble telescope has her way, even that limit might not hold. When she was home briefly this summer around trips to Italy with Oregon State and Asia with Team Canada, Hamblin and her family headed for even more remote country hours outside Houston to check on cattle. So far away from any light pollution at night, the heavens lit up. What was out there beyond home had always intrigued her growing up, whether “there” was the cosmos above or more terrestrial territory beyond Houston.

She wanted to explore. She just wasn’t sure what door would open to begin her journey.

It turned out to be a door to a basketball gym.

“I honestly could see her going to Pluto,” Wiese said of where life will take Hamblin. “I feel like she’ll be the first person on Pluto, as well as having a family and an established home probably somewhere in Canada.

“But she’s definitely going to change the world.”

If it needs doing, don’t put it past her.

**Freshmen fitting in nicely****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****Nov. 4, 2015**

Oregon State returns four of five starters and lost just one senior off a team that posted a 27-5 overall record and won its first Pac-12 women's basketball title last season.

The Beavers have a deep and talented team.

But that won't mean the three freshmen won't get an opportunity to show how good they are and can be in the program.

In a sense, Katie McWilliams, Taylor Kalmer and Tarea Green are more than freshmen, having been a part of 10 practices this summer and playing in four games in Italy with the rest of their new teammates.

"It almost feels like they're sophomores," coach Scott Rueck joked last week.

The class is headlined by McWilliams, the South Salem High product who was the state's Gatorade player of the year. Rueck describes the 6-foot-2 McWilliams as dynamic athlete.

"She's capable of playing multiple positions," Rueck said. "I can see her playing some 4 potentially before her career is over. Maybe her most natural position is the point. ... She brings incredible length and vision and she's an incredible facilitator. She's going to be a great one for Oregon State."

Kalmer, who Rueck said is an aggressive guard, scored 1,648 points in her high school career, averaging 18.7 per game as a senior at Cornoa Del Sol High in Chandler, Arizona.

"What (senior) Deven (Hunter) is to the 4 and the power forward, that aggressive player, that's what Taylor is to the wing," Rueck said. "She can play the 1, a combo guard. That kid's used to putting the ball in the basket. She's had to do that on teams she's played on. Very versatile."

The other freshman is Tarea Green, a 6-4 post player out of Hillsboro High.

"She has a very physical presence but has a finesse like I've never had in a post position where she can step out and knock 3s down. That's kind of her comfort zone in a lot of ways, but a beautiful touch," Rueck said.

Rueck has been pleased with how the three newcomers have been able to get acclimated. The trip to Italy was a big help, he added.

"All three have fit in beautifully," he said. "This group of upperclassmen have set the stage for them in many ways, included them from Day 1 like they were part of the family and made them feel so comfortable and part of things. That was evident in August when Italy practices started."

Kalmer said the upperclassmen have made it an easy transition.

"They did an amazing job and I couldn't ask for it in a better way," she said. "They help us on and off the court and help us through practice and plays and what to do. They've helped us quite a bit."

The returners have seen just how good the freshmen are already.

"They're good," senior guard Jamie Weisner said. "It's been exciting to see their progress just in the past couple weeks. They're fast learners who have caught on right way."

With a plethora of experience back, how much playing time will the freshmen get? That's up to the players and how hard they work to earn it,

"That's a challenge every year but it's a good challenge," Rueck said. "You better have that one. Those things normally play themselves out. Playing time is earned, it's not given and it's very competitive in here every day which is what you want."

"They have a way of taking care of each other through that competition and remembering to put first things first and that's our team's success. Once we get into true scrimmages and games, those things sort themselves out."

Regardless of how many minutes they play, it will be a help in several ways.

"Having extra bodies in general, especially when they're talented like they are, it helps, obviously," junior guard Sydney Wiese said. "It's going to give us a new dynamic as to how we operate as a team and new looks for the teams we have been playing that they're not used to. It's a fresh look."



## Senior class poised to lead Beavers

Steve Gress

Corvallis Gazette Times

November 3, 2015

It wasn't long after Gonzaga eliminated Oregon State in the second round of the NCAA women's basketball tournament last March on the Beavers' home floor that Jamie Weisner approached coach Scott Rueck.

It was not the ending she expected for her junior season, not after the Beavers had won the Pac-12 title and hosted the first and second rounds of the tournament.

She wanted to know what she needed to do to help ensure the Beavers wouldn't have the same taste in their mouths the next season.

"In some ways, as hard as that final loss was, it was the perfect experience for us, and for them," Rueck said last week. "And Jamie was one of them that it made a very positive impact on."

The Beavers were in a similar situation the previous season, having come off an NCAA tournament berth and losing in the second round.

But something is a little different this season.

Not to say the leadership is better this time around — that would be a slap in the face to Ali Gibson — but instead of having just one senior with a tangible sense of urgency, the Beavers have five players who know it's now or never to get where they want to go.

"It adds such an important dynamic to our team that we haven't had in past years because we've only had one senior," junior guard Gabby Hanson said. "Alyssa (Martin, two years ago) and Ali (Gibson) were strong seniors, but having a class of five seniors just adds a whole new dimension to our game.

"Their competitiveness, their will ... I feel super blessed to be able to do it with them and try to give them the best senior season."

The senior class includes four players who entered the program as freshmen — Weisner, Ruth Hamblin, Deven Hunter and Samantha Siegner — and a junior college transfer in Jen'Von'Ta Hill, who joined the program last season.

Weisner and Hamblin, along with junior Sydney Wiese, were voted team captains by their teammates.

Rueck has loved seeing Weisner, in particular, being more of a vocal leader. She has also done a good job making sure the freshmen have been integrated on and off the floor.

"I think as a senior I knew I had to step up and be a leader and be a voice on this team," Weisner said. "Scott kind of told me in the offseason, if you want to go further, if you want to be the great team you say you want to be, then you need to step up and just be a voice for the team. I guess that's what I'm trying to do."

It's not like the team needs a ton of leadership, as Hunter said, "I don't want to say (we're) self-lead but we are really good at knowing who needs to do what."

Freshman Taylor Kalmer said the seniors have made them feel welcomed.

"They did an amazing job and I couldn't ask for it in a better way," she said. "They help us on and off the court and help us through practice and plays and what to do. They've helped us quite a bit."

Regardless of what happens this season, it will be tough to see this class leave. They have been the catalyst for an incredible turnaround, but they feel they have more to accomplish.

"You go through that whole journey, from a rough freshmen year to seeing the benefits of those really hard lessons early," Rueck said. "And now, in many ways, this group is, I like the word preventative. They do everything right and it prevents any issue that could get in their way. They remove stumbling blocks.

"They are an incredible group. They believed in us when there was not much to believe in other than a vision. And then they've made that vision a reality. I'm expecting big things from them this year and I know they are, too."

**Mandy Close part of OSU women's basketball resurgence****Gary Horowitz****Statesman Journal****November 3, 2015**

CORVALLIS – It's been a decade since Mandy Close played in her final season as a guard on the Oregon State women's basketball team.

Her youthful appearance and slender physique suggests that she could still play for the Beavers.

"I'd rather impart knowledge than actually show them what I cannot do," Close said with a smile.

Close, 31, is in her third season as an assistant coach under Scott Rueck.

Much has changed with the women's basketball program since her playing days. Close never got to practice in the state-of-the-art OSU Basketball Center, which opened in the summer of 2013, and was never on a team that advanced to the NCAA tournament.

OSU won a school-record 27 games last season, garnered its first Pac-12 championship, led the conference in attendance at more than 4,000 per game, and was part of March Madness for the second year in a row.

Close played in a different era. Her career spanned the end of Judy Spoelstra's 10-year coaching career at OSU, and the first year of LaVonda Wagner's five-year run that ended in turmoil.

With OSU's rise to Pac-12 power status and on the verge of joining the national elite, Close serves as a bridge that connects past and present. The Beavers host Corban in an exhibition game Sunday leading up to the season opener Nov. 13 against Longwood at Gill Coliseum.

OSU was picked to repeat as conference champions in the preseason Pac-12 coaches poll, and is ranked No. 10 in the Associated Press preseason poll.

"It's really, really incredible to see what it's come from and has become, having been part of that," said Close, who is engaged to former OSU wide receiver Taylor Kavanaugh.

"I have a deep love and passion for this university. To see it get to this point where we're experiencing success, and these girls get to have that, that makes me really happy."

Close received her undergraduate degree from OSU in 2006, spent the next two years as an assistant director of operations for the women's basketball program, and earned a master's degree during that time in elementary education.

A native of Bozeman, Montana, Close returned to her home state and was an assistant coach at Montana State from 2008-13 before joining Rueck's staff.

"She brings an understanding of who Oregon State is," Rueck said. "She's somebody that walked in the halls and has experience that way and understands what Oregon State is from a recruiting standpoint."

Close, who works primarily with guards, also serves as recruiting coordinator. She was instrumental in bringing five-star recruit Katie McWilliams, a freshman guard who helped lead South Salem to the 6A state championship last season, to OSU.

As a player, Close was a gritty defender who averaged 13.3 points and a team-high 4.8 assists her senior year as the Beavers advanced to the WNIT for the third time in four seasons. She was a two-year captain.

Two-time all-Pac-12 junior guard Sydney Wiese said the work ethic Close brought to the court serves her well as a coach.

"She's always in the office, always recruiting. She's always doing the most for everyone," Wiese said. "What I love about her, what I appreciate about her, is how she's a mentor for us."

Close credits Rueck and the players for OSU's success, and an athletic department that "has committed to making basketball come back to life here in Corvallis."



While Close would be open to head coaching opportunities down the road, she embraces the moment.

"I love coaching. I love basketball," Close said. "Being able to be in a mentor role with these girls on and off the floor is really what I'm passionate about."

"I know that I appreciate having the talent we have in here because it keeps everyone honest so to speak," Siegner said. "You have to work your butt off every day."

OSU will be tested before conference play with a Dec. 19 home game against No. 4 Tennessee, and a Dec. 28 at No. 3 Notre Dame.

This is the first time in 16 years that Stanford was not picked to win the Pac-12 in the preseason media poll. The Cardinal is ranked No. 16 in the AP preseason poll, one spot behind Arizona State.

For all of the success last season the Beavers faded down the stretch, losing three of their last five games, including the NCAA tournament loss to Gonzaga at Gill Coliseum as a No. 3 seed.

"The way the year ended, this is a hungry group," Rueck said.

And everyone wants the seniors to go out in style.

The goal is for OSU's season to culminate with a berth in the Final Four in Indianapolis. The pieces are in place to get there.

"We have to make the most of their senior years and make the most of our time left together," Wiese said.

**Beavers will pace themselves physically after busy summer****Gina Mizell****The Oregonian/OregonLive****Nov. 2, 2015**

CORVALLIS — Scott Rueck says it already feels like December.

With a veteran-laden team, plus extra practices and a 10-day Italy tour in August, his Oregon State squad is ahead of schedule before the 2015-16 season begins next week. Additionally, Ruth Hamblin, Sydney Wiese and Jamie Weisner all played international ball this summer, preventing any rust from piling up before the Beavers' campaign.

But there's also a potential pitfall to all that basketball. As the Beavers get ready to embark on a long season — which they hope runs deep into March after entering the campaign as a top-10 team nationally and as the pick to repeat as Pac-12 champions — Rueck and his staff will be mindful to monitor his players physically to avoid burnout.

"It is a concern," Rueck said. "It's new for me. It's the first time I've had a team on a foreign tour in August, and you're putting miles on those legs a little bit. I think that's where your feel (of the team as coaches) comes in a little bit ..."

"We need to pace ourselves a bit, certainly. It is in my mind as we put together our calendar, our plan and our weekly regimens."

Players got two weeks off after the Italy trip to go home and rest before the fall term began. Jamie Weiser, for instance, got her wisdom teeth pulled, a "blessing in disguise" because it forced her to stay on the couch and watch movies.

And since everybody returned to Corvallis, practices have been a bit shorter. That's the way it should be, Rueck said, because it does not take as much time to install and tweak with such an experienced group. Players must also listen to their own bodies and not overwork themselves outside of practice as they move through the grind of the season.

"I know my first couple years, every day I felt like I needed to do something," Weisner said. "Just be in the gym running or something, and my body kind of wore down after a while ..."

"That's been a big learning curve and process for me throughout my career. I wouldn't say by any means I'm perfect at it, but I've gotten a lot better."

**Beavers embrace tough schedule****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****Nov. 2, 2015**

The Oregon State women's basketball team's mantra will always be one game at a time, but Gabby Hanson admits it's kind of difficult not to look forward to a couple marquee matchups this season.

The dates Dec. 19 and Dec. 28 come to mind in particular.

The Beavers host Tennessee, which came in at No. 4 in the USA Today preseason poll voted on by the coaches, on Dec. 19, then head to Notre Dame (No. 3 by the coaches) on Dec. 28.

"It's super exciting and I think that comes with the territory to the status that we're at," Hanson said. "You get to earn those games so you have to look at it that way. Those games don't just happen, you earn them."

The Beavers, who are No. 9 in the poll, played at Tennessee last season and the Volunteers, who have three Oregonians on the team, will come to Gill this season. Oregon State hung tough until Tennessee was able to pull away in the closing minutes for a 74-63 win last year. Notre Dame came to Corvallis in 2013 and pulled out a 70-58 victory, scoring the final eight points in the last three minutes to stave off the Beavers' upset bid.

But those are just two games on a 29-game regular season that includes 18 Pac-12 games. The Beavers also head to Puerto Rico for two games over the Thanksgiving break.

"We have a nice balance of home games, road games and big-time tests," coach Scott Rueck said. "Between those two games alone (Tennessee and Notre Dame) along with the rest of our nonconference, we're going to find out exactly who we are in November and December."

The Beavers start with an exhibition on Sunday against Corban then open the regular season at home on Nov. 13 against Longwood. They go to Portland on Nov. 15 and host UC Riverside on Nov. 22.

OSU heads to Puerto Rico to face Hofstra and Arkansas (Nov. 27-28) and then plays at Marquette (Dec. 3) before returning home to face Idaho (Dec. 12), Cal State Bakersfield (Dec. 15), Tennessee and Cal Poly (Dec. 21).

The Beavers wrap up the nonconference schedule at Notre Dame on Dec. 28, then open Pac-12 play at USC (Jan. 2) and UCLA (Jan. 4).

"It's definitely exciting to know we are good enough to play all these teams now and have this many on our schedule," senior Deven Hunter said. "It's definitely a lot to think about and know we have to prepare for these. Preseason isn't going to be guaranteed anymore."

Unlike the past two seasons, the Beavers will play Pac-12 powers Stanford and California twice this time around. Cal comes to town Jan. 15 and Stanford follows on Jan. 17.

The Beavers only play the Washington schools once, making the trek north for games on Feb. 5 (Washington) and Feb. 7 (Washington State).

OSU also only plays the Arizona schools at home on Jan. 29 (Arizona) and Feb. 1 (Arizona State). The Beavers play the Los Angeles schools and Mountain schools (Colorado and Utah) twice, in addition to back-to-back games against Oregon (Jan. 8 at home and Jan. 10 at Oregon).

"I think if you look at the schedule over 10 years, it's even," Rueck said. "You have to step back and look at it. It is odd that we don't play home and home with the Washingtons no doubt, but we don't go to Phoenix or Tucson, either. There's tradeoff and there's good and bad to it all and so you just play what's on your schedule."

With the tough competition, the Beavers can't let a potential loss or two get them down.

"You have to know that everybody is out there to play their best game against you, no matter who it is," Hunter said. "You have to know that if there is that point where you lose one game, you have to know it's one game, we've got to keep playing to the end."

**Women's hoops making tweaks to be elite****Brenden Slaughter****Barometer****Oct. 27, 2015**

The Oregon State women's basketball team is entering a realm in which no other OSU team has ever gone. Entering this season, the Beavers have their highest preseason ranking in program history at No. 7 nationally and were picked to finish first in the Pac-12 conference.

The expectations are certainly high for the Beavers, and for the first time since head coach Scott Rueck took over the program, the Beavers have the target on their back. Everyone in the Pac-12 and the nation will be trying to take them down night in and night out.

It's a far cry from where this program started under Rueck, who is entering his sixth year. They have taken the proper steps in getting better, and have used a fun atmosphere to take the pressure off.

The Beavers have taken big strides on the court while remaining true to their light, comedic sides. Even the photo shoot for the official team posters were an example of the team's collective personality.

"They used to want us to be serious in the posters, and that isn't us and that isn't what we are about," Rueck said. "We have fun at what we do, and at the same time we are warriors between the line. So that balance is sustainable and makes season after season fun for us."

Coaching staffs are always improving in the offseason and looking to make minor tweaks to their program to make them more efficient. Rueck and his staff are no exception as they have been evaluating the program from top to bottom in order to be amongst the nation's best basketball teams.

"You're always reevaluating as a staff and looking for ways to improve," Rueck said. "We are looking to do things a little different this year and we are in a position to do so with these players."

Rueck has also placed an emphasis on each individual player improving their craft in order to be the best team that they can be. He challenged his players in the offseason to become better players and lead by example.

It starts with senior center Ruth Hamblin, who is excited about the idea of moving away from the basket to get teammates more involved within the offense.

"I think that it increases our team's ability to move around and open up the post will make the offense more dynamic," Hamblin said. "It makes the defense have to work a lot harder to stop us."

For returning senior guard Samantha Siegner, making the tweaks within her game will make OSU better overall as a team.

"I need to be consistent and be a more vocal leader," Siegner said. "There are always things that you need to improve on."

Last year the OSU women were the No. 3 seed in the tournament and advanced to the second round before being upset by Gonzaga. That left a bad taste in the mouth of many returning players, and they are determined to take the next step to be elite nationally.

According to Hamblin, the Beavers have to mesh as a group at the correct moment in order to not falter early in the NCAA tournament like last year.

"We want to stay together as a unit and play our best basketball of the year in the postseason," Hamblin said. "We peaked at the wrong time last year."

Junior guard Sydney Wiese sees last year as a good learning experience on the whole, but there is much room to improve.

"We need to pay attention to little things in practice and not get complacent," Wiese said. "All the little things matter, and we need to stay focused and have fun. And if we do, big things will happen."

The goals of this team are very high, and they should be based on their returning core of players and the coaching of Rueck and his staff.

"We know what we want" Rueck said. "We want to cut another net, we want more than one this year."

**Beavers know target is on their backs****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****Oct. 26, 2015**

The target has been placed squarely on the backs of the Oregon State women's basketball team.

The Beavers, coming off the program's first-ever Pac-12 Conference regular-season title last season, were selected to repeat as conference champs by a vote of the coaches earlier this month.

It was to be expected as the Beavers, who went 16-2 in the Pac-12 and 27-5 overall, return four starters, along with several key contributors off the bench.

The Beavers say they relish the situation.

"I think it just enhances the challenge, just makes the challenge even greater and this is a team of competitors," said coach Scott Rueck, entering his sixth season leading Oregon State, on Monday morning as the Beavers held a local media day at the OSU Basketball Center.

Rueck said he loves the pressure that comes with it.

"Pressure is a privilege," he said. "This team has never backed away from a challenge."

The Beavers still have a couple weeks until they play games — they host Corban on Nov. 8 in an exhibition game before opening the regular season on Nov. 13 against Longwood.

With such a veteran team — the Beavers returns nine players who saw extensive action during stretches last season — Rueck isn't overly concerned with how his team will respond.

Rueck said the team never talks about wins but about focusing on how to achieve the ultimate goals — of cutting down the net, or nets, again this season.

To do that, Rueck said, the Beavers must execute and be great in each area of the game and leave the past in the past.

"I just think we can't put too much focus on records," he said. "Last year doesn't matter anymore. They know that it's over. Now we're on to this year. What have we done this year? Nothing."

The Beavers hope that approach will foster different results down the stretch, where the Beavers dropped three of their final five games last season.

"It's the concept of consistency," said junior Gabby Hanson. "We have to be consistent down the stretch because that ends up being the most important part of the season if you want to continue on. We're really dedicated in being able to do that and then having the confidence and the will to do that."

With the way last season ended — losing at home to Gonzaga in the second round of the NCAA tournament — the Beavers have plenty of motivation to stay focused.

"In some ways, as hard as that final loss was, it was the perfect experience for us," Rueck said.

Added junior Kolbie Drum: "The main thing is just staying together. Wins or losses, we learn from it and just get better so that at the end of the year, that's when we peak."

**Beavers look to build off 2014-15 successes****Steve Gress****Corvallis Gazette Times****Oct. 12, 2015**

Last Wednesday wasn't the first time the Oregon State women's basketball team took the floor together for practice.

The players and coaches had 10 sanctioned practices in August before heading to Italy for four games over a 10-day span.

But when the Beavers returned to the court last week, there was a different feel. It got a little more intense.

"It's season time now," senior Jamie Weisner said Monday afternoon. "We're playing for keeps. I wouldn't say the Italy practices weren't intense but we're just building off that. Each day you want to progress and that's what we're doing."

Those August practices helped get the three freshman integrated to the way the Beavers practice and allowed them to form cohesion on and off the court with the returners.

"When we got back in here on Wednesday we already had that base level so we just took it from there," Weisner said. "I would say they put us ahead of the game."

The Beavers, who have an exhibition game on Nov. 8 against Corban before opening the season at home against Longwood on Nov. 13, return four of five starters off last season's team that went 16-2 in the Pac-12 and won the program's first conference title.

OSU was a No. 3 seed in the NCAA tournament and hosted games in the first and second rounds of the tournament. However, the season came to a disappointing end with a 76-64 loss to Gonzaga in the second round.

For as good as last season was, as the stakes got higher, the Beavers stumbled a bit down the stretch — they lost three of their final five games for finish the season 27-5

"I think the biggest thing to take away from that is to handle that pressure," Weisner said. "We shouldn't really feel the outside pressure but obviously it's always there."

With the four starters back, and a solid recruiting class, the Beavers are expected to be in the running for another Pac-12 title and deep run in the NCAA tournament.

OSU was recently ranked No. 7 by Lindy's College Sports, and senior center Ruth Hamblin was named a preseason second-team all-American and the defensive player of the year by the publication.

But the Beavers don't care about any of that.

"We're focused on our own expectations," junior point guard Sydney Wiese said. "People are going to talk about what they want to talk about, they're going to release articles about rankings and whatever. That doesn't matter.

"I think what matters is what we do out here every day with each other and how we push each other and how we execute every single possession."

The Beavers have their own lofty goals.

And they know what it will take to reach them.

"Our expectations internally have always been to be the best we can be," Weisner said. "This year, I think we have more of that confidence. We've been there, we've done it, we've won a championship, so we have that confidence."

While the Beavers have plenty of talent and players who have tasted success, there is still work to be done over the next few weeks as they build a championship mentality.



Ali Gibson, who wrapped up her Beavers career in March, played for Puerto Rico in the Pan-Am Games and is still competing internationally.

Current Beavers Marie Gulich (Germany) and Gabby Hanson (Sweden) have also played internationally.

"It's become sort of a habit for everybody on the team to go play overseas or internationally over the summer time," Wiese said. "To adapt to different systems, I think that makes us so versatile as individuals to be able to run whatever (national team) coaches show us and then whatever coach Rueck shows us here, it's just a good opportunity for us to grow as players."

Wiese credits the Beavers coaching staff.

"I think it shows how good our coaching staff is," she said. "Because they're preparing us in here (practice facility) every single day to become better players individually. Obviously I think we're a very strong team, but then to go and be able to adapt to a new system and new players, I think that says a lot about our coaching staff and how well they prepare us to play basketball."

It was also fun to watch teammates succeed this summer.

"It's great for all of Beaver Nation, our team and incoming recruits, they get to see that you don't just have success here, we build people here for success in other areas and other things you want to pursue," Weisner said. "And we don't get to be with them all the time throughout the summer so just seeing their faces on the TV and like that's my teammate, that's my best friend. Pointing that out to people is cool and I think it is a good rep for Oregon State as a whole too, so it's awesome." OSU's new indoor practice center.

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While the Beavers have plenty of talent and players who have tasted success, there is still work to be done over the next few weeks as they build a championship mentality.

And they have plenty of motivation.

"Human instinct tells us we're good enough, but we still have things to improve on and it's those little things, they make a difference," Wiese said. "So I think it's just up to us to hold each other accountable, to remind ourselves that last year we fell short."

**International play benefiting Oregon State Beavers women's basketball****Gina Mizell****The Oregonian/OregonLive****August 14, 2015**

CORVALLIS — If Sydney Wiese needs a reminder of the highlight of her summer, she can look at the lanyard hanging by a tack on her bedroom wall.

It's filled with pins from countries all over the world, which the Oregon State point guard gathered with Arizona State's Katie Hempen in an athlete village in South Korea.

Wiese was part of Team USA that won gold at the World University Games last month, an experience she calls "surreal." But that's just one example of the international flavor the Beavers are experiencing this offseason.

Center Ruth Hamblin took silver at the World University games while playing for Team Canada. Coach Scott Rueck was an assistant for Team USA at the Pan American games in Toronto. Even former Beavers guard Ali Gibson faced off against Rueck as a member of Puerto Rico's Pan American team.

And now, the Beavers are back to practice to prepare for an Italy tour that begins later this month.

"To see our players hold our own with the best," Rueck said, "I think it's just one more thing to let others know, yeah, our program is not only on the rise, but ready to move near the top. That's a really neat thing."

Entering this summer, Hamblin had plenty of international experience with the Canadian Senior National Team. But this was her first experience at a multi-sport event. She called it a "mini Olympics," complete with an opening ceremony and the athletes all living in apartment buildings in a designated "village."

Sharing the experience with a college teammate was an added bonus. Hamblin and Wiese hung out nearly every day — until communication stopped once they knew their teams would meet in the gold medal game. Yet they shared a glance and a laugh during pregame warm-ups, when the song Lollipop — a tune from the movie Pitch Perfect 2 that they had created an inside joke about months prior — blared over the loudspeakers.

"To play against her, that's like a storybook right there," Wiese said of Hamblin. "It makes the world feel small."

Rueck noted several benefits of the time spent abroad. Though Wiese came off the bench, she also proved she belonged amongst the best college players in the country. Hamblin consistently got 20-30 minutes of action each game, emphasizing rebounding and running the floor.

And Rueck described his time in Toronto as "unique." It was his first time representing his country. It was different to be an assistant, where he scouted three opponents and worked to both blend in on a staff and "pick (his) spots" to make an impact.

But the experience also reinforced that his staff is doing the right thing in building a program that spent the bulk of last season ranked in the top 10 nationally.

"We are competing at such a high level on a daily basis," Rueck said. "After being with the best players in college basketball, there are a lot of similarities to my team right here. That was really encouraging."

Now the Beavers are utilizing the 10 additional practices they get before departing for Italy. It allows them to experiment on offense and defense and integrate three new freshmen, including former South Salem star and five-star recruit Katie McWilliams. With everybody but Gibson back from last year's Pac-12 championship squad, Rueck and Wiese said it already feels like November.

Rueck is thankful he already "got reps" in the international game, from rule differences to the pace of play. He expects the Beavers to match up with quality competition and hopes they are forced to combat a bit of adversity. And of course, the Beavers expect navigating a foreign country together for 10 days will create memories and strengthen the team's bond.

After all, Wiese couldn't help but wish while in South Korea that all of her OSU teammates had joined her. Perhaps by next month, they will all have souvenirs to add to their bedroom walls.



## International Experience Valuable For Beavers

Steve Gress

Corvallis Gazette Times

August 13, 2015

Ruth Hamblin hasn't spent much time sleeping in her own bed this summer. She's also running out of blank pages in her passport. Hamblin has had a whirlwind past few months as she competed for teams representing Canada's women's basketball program in international competition.

"I kind of went for two months straight bouncing back between the top team and the second team," Hamblin said on Tuesday, following the first practice with her Oregon State teammates as they prepare for a 10-day trip to compete in Italy.

"But I was very fortunate to kind of have both situations. I started off with the top team and I did get to go to Spain and play some games with them and just see how they work in game situations so that was helpful."

Hamblin, who was a third-team All-American last season as a junior with the Beavers, competed in the World University Games in South Korea, and ended up with a silver medal for her efforts.

"Getting to play at the age-group level against players my age was a good experience for me to get more minutes and more exposure to that level, and I think I really learned a lot from that," she said.

Hamblin ran into OSU teammate Sydney Wiese, a member of Team USA, in a battle for gold. While it was an "incredible" experience to play against Wiese, who helped the Americans to the gold, Hamblin said she would much rather have her as a teammate."

"It's definitely not the outcome we were looking for but at the end of the day I'm just happy for both of us that we could be at that point in our lives," Hamblin said.

She also learned a lot off the court.

"It's such an amazing growth experience as a young person getting to see the world and just experiencing these different cultures, especially in China we were so immersed in the culture," Hamblin said. "You just learn so much and just develop an appreciation for all these different places in the world and what they have to bring."

While Hamblin is no stranger to international play, it was the first exposure for Wiese.

"It was definitely surreal," said Wiese, who will enter her junior year at OSU as the school's all-time 3-point leader. "I never thought that I would be on the USA team. I mean, it's always a dream but for it to actually happen, to even make the team and then to win a gold medal like we did, it was definitely a blessing to be a part of."

As for going up against Hamblin? It was an "unforgettable moment," she said.

Coach Scott Rueck joined the international fray as well as he was an assistant coach for Team USA in the Pan American Games in Toronto, helping the American squad to a silver medal.

He said it was a unique experience: being an assistant, living in dorms, having a roommate and having college-aged players going up against older players.

"It was a great experience and I didn't want it to end," he said. "... I learned so much from so many different angles and perspectives, so it was very valuable."

So, since Wiese was the only one to bring home a gold, does that give her a higher standing? Not at all, she said.

"What we all did was incredible and amazing," she said. "We're all taking away lessons from it. The medals are beside the point. Of course, I hold it against Ruth, occasionally. I have to. But I think the intangibles we got from the experiences are most important."

Jamie Weisner also spent time with Team Canada. She bounced back and forth between two teams and played in China with Hamblin. She said she gained a lot of confidence with their and got in a good rhythm to train for a spot on the Senior National Team's roster for the Pan American team. Weisner was an alternate but did not go to Toronto.

The international experience is nothing new for the OSU program.



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