

Saturday, March 8, 2008

Golden Grizzlies advance to Summit League semifinals

Junior Jessica Pike scored 15 points with nine rebounds, freshman Stacey Farrell scored 10 points, and sophomore Melissa Jeltma turned in a nine-point, 11-rebound performance as the Oakland University women's basketball team picked up a 60-49 victory over Centenary in the quarterfinals of The Summit League Championship Tournament on Saturday afternoon.

The Golden Grizzlies will play the winner of Sunday's Oral Roberts/IPFW game on Monday at 1 p.m. (noon local time)

"I'm very pleased with how we kept our composure," said head coach Beckie Francis. "I thought we had some great looks inside in the first half and some of them weren't falling, and sometimes teams can get really tight and hang their heads. I was really proud how we kept our cool and played great defense and kept getting good stops. I'm very happy with how we rested everybody and still came out with a double-figure win."

Oakland got off to a slow start, trading buckets with Centenary over the first seven minutes of the game. With the Ladies holding a 10-8 lead with 13:02 remaining, Oakland went on a 9-0 run to claim a seven point (17-10) lead with 10:35 remaining in the game after a pair of free throws by Anna Patritto.

Centenary responded with an 8-0 run of its own, taking an 18-17 lead with 8:09 remaining. Just over a minute later, Pike drilled a jumper that gave OU the lead. OU extended the margin to eight (28-20) going into halftime.

The Ladies controlled the pace in the opening four minutes of the second half, pulling to within three (28-25) with 16:13 left to play in the contest. However, Oakland quickly took control and pushed its lead to double digits (41-31) after a 3-pointer by Pike with 12:49 remaining in the contest. The Golden Grizzlies' lead increased to as many as 17 (53-36) down the stretch before the Grizzlies cleared the bench and cruised to the victory.

"We had a certain strategy of getting a lot of people in - we got every single person, I think 14 people played and I was really happy with that," said Francis. "I also told them that I was really proud again with how they kept their composure and how some freshmen, particularly Stacey Farrell, really stepped up (today)."

Centenary's Anne Farrell led all players with 20 points and 13 rebounds. OU held a slight advantage from the floor, outshooting the Ladies 34.9 percent to 32.0 percent. Centenary held a 42-41 advantage on the rebounding glass, but the Golden Grizzlies stingy defense forced 24 turnovers while OU committed just 12.

"(Centenary) played pretty well against us down there, too," said Francis. "They gave us a fight. I really like that team. They're scrappy, they're hard to guard because they're tenacious and they attack. It was good practice - not that we use a game for practice - but it was hard to defend and I thought it gave us some good reps on trying to stop an attacking-type offense. The two teams we could possibly play (in the semifinals) with IPFW or Oral Roberts are the same types of attacking teams and it was really good for us to go against."

Oakland University's men's team takes on Western Illinois at 8:30 p.m. Central Time (9:30 EST) on Sunday, March 9.

A first place finish in the tournament for either team will secure the teams a berth in the 2008 NCAA Division I Tournament. There are a number of ways to support the Grizzlies in their drive toward the "Big Dance."

The tournament will be broadcast online for those who wish to take in all of the action. The Summit League is offering a full tournament package for \$19.95. The package includes every men's and women's tournament contest, minus the televised championship games. The women's championship game will be broadcast on ESPNU and the men's on ESPN.

The Webcasts, available from the Summit League Web site, require a high speed Internet connection and Microsoft Media Player 9 or greater, Macromedia Flash software, sound card, speakers, a screen resolution of 800x600 or 1024x768, and a Pentium 600Mhz or greater for a Windows user or 800Mhz with OS X Version 10.1 or higher for Macs to view. For more information on the Webcast of the tournament, visit the Summit League Web site Live. For those with slower Internet connections, audio access is available for all Summit League games. Free audio broadcasts are available for OU's Summit League tournament games are available from the **OU Athletics** Web site.

Download Oakland University's fight song "OU Fight" and play it as you cheer on the Grizzlies in the tournament. The song can be played from the Web site, downloaded and saved to be loaded on a cell phone. Not sure of the lyrics? They are available, too.

Should the Grizzlies advance to the championship round of the tournament, watch **The News at OU** for information on watch parties. If either team moves on to a post-season tournament, that information also will be available from **The News at OU**. Alumni can follow OU Alumni Association sponsored events by visiting the **OUAA** Web site.

For more information on OU's basketball teams, visit the **Oakland University Athletics** Web site.



Melissa Jeltma helps put the Golden Grizzlies on top.



April Kidd



OU Head Coach Beckie Francis rallies the team.

SUMMARY

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