



Friday, October 31, 2003

## Men's basketball team prepares for championship run

After five seasons of NCAA Division I play, **Oakland University's men's basketball team** has won a regular season Mid-Continent Conference title, had a least one All-Mid-Con player each year, and beaten a pair of Big 10 schools (Michigan and Northwestern). This year, for the first time since joining the Mid-Con, the Golden Grizzlies were selected the preseason favorite for the conference title in a poll of league coaches, sports information directors and media members. The next item Oakland would like to add to its resume is a trip to the NCAA Tournament.

The Golden Grizzlies finished with a 17-11 record last season (10-4 Mid-Con) and tied for second place with IUPUI. Despite a first round loss to Southern Utah at the Mid-Con Tournament, Oakland was the hottest team in the conference at the end of the season, winning nine of its last 10 regular season games.

"On paper, we have gone through the transition (from Division II to Division I), had a lot of success and built for the future," said head coach Greg Kampe. "We believe we have the ability and the talent to win a league championship and the conference tournament. Those are our goals. There is no question that this season is the time to do it. We have everything needed to win."

Beginning his 20th year at Oakland, Kampe will have the luxury of returning virtually his entire team, including all five starters. Once again, the team will be led by one of the top players in the nation, senior guard Mike Helms.

Helms placed his name on the national stage a year ago, flirting with the national scoring title before finishing third with his 26.9 average. He scored 30 or more points 13 times, with a season-high of 43 against Texas Southern. A leading candidate for the Pomeroy Naismith Award for the best senior player in the nation, Helms is the top-returning scorer in Division I for 2003-04.

Helms, however, is more than an offensive threat, finishing among OU leaders last season with 111 rebounds, 56 assists and 40 steals. He already is ninth on Oakland's all-time scoring list and is among the top-10 in several other categories, including free throws. Last year, he became Oakland's first men's Division I basketball All-American when the Associated Press named him to the honorable mention team. He also was named Mid-Con Player of the Year and is chosen to repeat that honor as the league's preseason Player of the Year selection. He is one of three Golden Grizzlies named to the preseason first team all-conference squad.

Joining Helms on the Mid-Con preseason all-conference first team are juniors Rawle Marshall and Cortney Scott. Both made their first seasons in OU uniforms memorable ones, with Marshall being named the league's Newcomer and Defensive Player of the Year, averaging 18.1 points to go with his 80 steals and a school-record-tying 41 blocked shots. Scott led the Mid-Con in rebounding at 8.7 per game and averaged 14.5 points on his way to earning second team all-conference honors.

The team has a much tougher schedule than last year. Oakland opens its regular season Saturday, Nov. 8, with an exhibition game against Hillsdale at home. The Golden Grizzlies also will host Missouri and Texas A&M and will travel to play Cincinnati, Michigan, Memphis and Detroit.

"Our non-league schedule is going to be very difficult this year, with some of the best teams in the country" Kampe said. "We're doing it (the difficult schedule) because we believe we have a good team and have a chance to go to post-season play."

For a roster, schedule, statistics and a detailed season outlook, visit the **men's basketball** pages on the **Oakland University Athletics** Web site.

### SUMMARY

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