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OU guard finishes third in nation in scoring

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

After all the national media attention paid to Oakland University junior guard Mike Helms for being one of the top scorers in NCAA Division I play, both he and OU basketball coach Greg Kampe relish the positive attention gained by the university.

"The media attention I received has been great for OU and shows that we're a strong Division I program," Helms said. "We have strong players and it shows that we're a major program."

Helms, a 6-foot, 185-pound guard, finished third among NCAA Division I players with a 26.9 points-per-game average after leading the nation in this category for a long stretch beginning in late January. However, Helms, sophomore guard Rawle Marshall and sophomore forward Courtney Scott lead the nation in scoring for three players on the same team.

Helms was named the Mid-Continent Conference Men's Basketball Player of the Year and led the league in scoring with 27.6 points per game. He scored more than 20 points a conference-best 22 times, including 14 games with 30 or more points. Throughout the season, his productivity gained attention from local TV and newspapers as well as national publications such as USA Today.

Though he has every right to view himself as a star, Helms takes a more humble approach by crediting his teammates for a great deal of his success and acknowledging that his abilities have given Oakland a share of the media spotlight, which isn't always easy among Big Ten powerhouses such as Michigan and Michigan State.

"I just play with my teammates offensively and take what comes to me," Helms said. "My coach and teammates expect (high scoring) from me, and it comes from expectations that I put on myself. I know that I have to bring my 'A' game. It gives me more intensity and I play with more adrenaline.

"I'm not really focused on my stats, but sometimes it's on my mind. To be the number one scorer in the nation is a very elite category. But to be in the top three as a junior with two other seniors (Ruben Douglas of New Mexico and Henry Domercant of Eastern Illinois) can't be that bad."

Kampe agreed with Helms' assessment and said there's no reason why he can't continue putting up big numbers next season.

"Helms' ability to score in so many ways makes it very hard to defend him," Kampe said. "If you take one thing away, he's got many other ways to put the ball in the basket. He's really been a major media story, and it's a unique situation to have a player in the top three nationally in scoring.

"What Oakland has been is a regional story since we made the move to Division I athletics (from Division I-AAA in 1998). But because he's been such a great story, Helms has brought a lot of national attention to OU. It's why we made the move to Division I and what Division I athletics is all about. And Helms has been a great ambassador for OU. It's just the type of kid and athlete he is."

Oakland (17-11, 10-4 Mid-Con) ended its season with a 66-55 loss to Southern Utah in the first round of the Mid-Con Tournament. But Helms' great season, coupled with strong play from Marshall and Scott, means the Golden Grizzlies have a solid core of players for the 2003-2004 season.

Marshall, who was selected first-team all-conference, was named newcomer and defensive player of the year in his first season with OU since transferring from Ball State. He averaged 18.2 points and led the Mid-Con in steals with 2.85 per game. Scott was named second-team all-conference after averaging 14.5 points and 8.7 rebounds.

For rosters, schedules, statistics and detailed game notes, visit the **men's basketball** pages on the **OU Athletics** Web site.

SUMMARY

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