

Basketball from the land down under

By KYLE NORDEEN
Sports editor

Adapting to life as a college student is no easy task.

Be it a four-year university or a junior college like those of us at Ohlone, we are required to become even more responsible for ourselves in order to get the things that we need done.

Life as a student athlete is even more challenging, requiring the time management skills and determination to excel both on the field/court and in the classroom to maintain your eligibility.

Now try to imagine adapting to that life — in a place you've never been — more than 8,000 miles away from your home.

That is exactly what Jarrad Jackson and Nick Clarke are doing this semester, leaving behind their home of Perth, Australia in order to advance their basketball careers here at Ohlone.

"We were both looking for a junior college to attend and we picked California as the destination," said Jackson.

"It's very similar to our climate back home in Perth."

Jackson, whose father is from Chicago, has never been to the United States before coming to school here, said

another influential factor in their decision to play for head coach John Peterson was another Australian born player that played here, Scott Kenny.

"We looked on the internet and saw that there was an Australian here before," said Jackson.

"We thought it was just going to be easiest to set up because they've already been through that."

Coach Peterson and his staff don't really do any recruiting to these kinds of locations, so it all comes down to the guys wanting to come here.

"They've all contacted us," said Peterson.

"It was all random emails. To be honest, I don't really know how they found us."

Both Clarke and Jackson attended the Willetton Senior High School back home and currently live together along with Ashley Stephens, who is also from Australia, Oivind Lundestad, who is from Norway and Lauri Toivonen, who is from Finland.

Being accustomed to life here, especially on their own with a group of guys their own age, has been quite the experience for them.

"Of course it's different," said Clarke.

"You miss your family... but we kind of have our own



Photo courtesy of Jarrad Jackson/Facebook

Jarrad Jackson (right) and Nick Clarke (center), along with Oivind Lundestad (left) have been adapting to life in the United States while honing their skills on the basketball court at Ohlone.

little international house. I was living with my mom back home," said Jackson.

"But now you have five 20-year olds living together and you couldn't ask for better roommates."

While they are from all over the world, the fact they have all left their homes to play here has helped them form quite the special bond.

"We are more drawn to each other," said Clarke. "The guys from America have their own

group within the group and the same with us. All of our classes are together as well."

Clarke is still undecided on what in particular he wants to study, but knows that he wants to do something sports related, while Jackson is planning on getting his bachelor's degree in education.

What they both have in common, though, is a desire to advance their skills on the court.

"There really isn't a collegiate system back in Australia," said Clarke.

"They have universities, but they don't have sports associated with them. So to come here, at this age, is to improve your game."

Coach Peterson has noticed the differences in the styles of play from these foreign players, but has found them to be extremely coachable.

"They've certainly been coached better," said Peterson. "It's not even close. Their understanding of how to play and how to play as a group is more advanced."

Just as Peterson has taken note of the difference in coaching these players have received, they have noticed that the game of basketball here is completely different. Peterson notes that there is a lot more one-on-one and individual play here in the states, while the game in Australia and abroad is more team based.

"It's really different for me," said Jackson. "It's so much faster and everybody seems like they've had too many Red Bulls, just running around."

"It's a lot more athletic," said Clarke. "Everyone here is a lot more athletic. Back home you have two or three guys who are as athletic as some of the guys on the team."

Both plan on returning to Australia at some point to continue their careers.

They know, though, that playing here will really give them an edge in honing their talent.

Softball primed for 2012

By NAVIN KRISHNAN
Staff writer

The Ohlone softball team is locked and loaded to produce another dominant, winning season.

Teams have a consistent and reasonably healthy habit of winning.

"We always have a goal to win a conference," said head coach Donna Runyon.

Any player, coach or program believes winning is the cure-all solution. The toughest part about winning is the preparation.

"We have to work for the first two or three weeks on fundamentals, things that we've discovered. We need to work on our skill; the skill that we've had and that we don't have that we saw the whole semester," said Runyon.

The softball team has had plenty of time for trial and error during the course of scrimmaging.

"Fall semester, we had fall ball and it showed us a lot of what we're good at and what we're not good at," said Runyon. "If we want to [do well] we have to work on the things that we don't do well."

Something that must be clicking in order for the Renegades to succeed this season, said Runyon, is pitching.

"Well, pitching is always a key to any success for softball. I have two sophomore [pitchers] coming back and I also have a freshman. Brittany Wright from California High School. The two returning sophomores are from Newark Memorial and Castro Valley high schools," said Runyon.

Of course, every piece of such a cultured team is important.

"I have a returning catcher who's an all-league player," said Runyon. "I also have a shortstop from Washington High School." Runyon indicated her sophomore outfielder is also key to her team's success.

Such a consistent tradition of winning is bound to be recognized on any level.

"We have won nine Coast Conference championships in a row. We've gone to regionals, and the last few years we've gone to super regionals," said Runyon.

"In 2009, we made it to the big show. We were in the final eight. Last year we were ranked No. 3 going into the playoffs. To get us over the hump, I think they just got to believe."

In a team with such unconditional winning, the focus of the season is an inalienable goal: keep the winning streak alive.

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