

A burst of energy

Freshmen commits Katie Fiso and Faith Ehis Etute are bringing a fresh attitude to Oregon women's basketball

By Lily Crane

Most of the practice squad had already cleared the Portland Trail Blazers practice facility on April 11, but one player stayed behind to put up a few extra shots. As Katie Fiso took off her practice jersey, she revealed a long-sleeved Oregon Ducks shirt.

This is the type of school pride that Oregon women's basketball will add in the 2024-25 season. Incoming freshman guard Fiso played at the Northwest Shootout in Portland on April 14. Meanwhile, forward commit Faith Ehis Etute represented Team World at the Nike Hoop Summit in Portland the day prior.

Ducks' fans have seen plenty of top recruits come into the program, show promise and then transfer. Fiso isn't just a skilled No. 31 recruit; she's a player who grew up a fan of Oregon women's basketball.

"I loved Oregon ever since I was a kid. It's been my dream school," Fiso said. "Just to be able to have the opportunity to get the offer and be able to go there — it's truly a blessing." She added that the "welcoming spirit" she received from the coaching staff sealed the deal. Etute was also swayed to join the Ducks because of the staff.

"I chose Oregon because of the coaches and teammates. I really liked them and I liked the place a lot," Etute said. "I never played in green but I was really excited to try on the uniform. I really love [the] ducks."

Oregon is getting a vocal leader in Fiso. The reigning Washington Gatorade Player of the Year directed traffic on both ends of the floor on April 14. What may have seemed like a casual All-Star game to others was taken seriously by Fiso. She took on the title of floor general by putting up hand signals and shouting from the bench.

Fiso said that Ducks fans can expect "a burst of energy" from her next season. She never quit hustling in the Northwest Shootout on either side of the floor. Fiso exhibited her smooth jumper without forcing bad shots. The mental resolve to be a team-first player helped usher Garfield High School to three Washington state titles.

Her freshman counterpart Etute has a much quieter demeanor. The Luxembourg native did most of her talking on the court at the Nike Hoop Summit. Etute showcased her ability to seamlessly move past defenders to get a bucket despite being a smaller forward.

Etute previously impressed fans with her play at the 2023 U18 Women's European Championship. In six games she averaged 31.5 points and 23.3 rebounds, including a 40-point, 33 rebounds and eight steals performance against Romania. Etute didn't come close to those numbers on April 13, but she still scored 12 points and hauled in four rebounds in 13 minutes.

Fiso participated in scrimmages against Etute's World team ahead of the Nike Hoop Summit as part of the Portland Lady Generals. The practice squad also included 2025 commit Sara Barhoum. The three were able to gain an early impression of what the future looks like.

"She's a really great player," Etute said when talking about what it was like to play against Fiso. "She really made it hard for us to win."

The 2023-24 season was well below the usual standard of Ducks basketball. Oregon lost a program record of 14 games in a row to finish the season. To make matters worse, two of the Ducks' top players, Grace VanSlooten and Chance Gray, transferred at the beginning of April. Many fans and media members have questioned the leadership of head coach Kelly Graves and his staff. The freshmen duo, however, remains confident in the program's direction.

"I trust the coaching staff. I trust their decisions and their playmaking — their high-level coaching with high intelligence," Fiso said. "So just trusting their plan and whatever they do, whoever they recruit."

Fiso said that she's already "locked in" for next season. She's frequently in touch with her future teammates. Etute said she briefly visited with associate head coach Jodie Foster and assistant coach Oti Gildon when she was in Portland. Fiso said she's ready to set the foundation for the next era of Oregon hoops and is "excited to be welcomed into the Ducks' community."