

Freshman*

Kiki Williams is a freshman in name only

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THE KIKI WILLIAMS FILE

Number: 30

Position: F

Height: 6-1

Year: Fr*

*indicates an athlete has used their redshirt season

Watching the games last season in street clothes was bad enough. Watching her team fall to 12-16 and miss the NCAA tournament, that was bad enough. Only being able to participate 26 minutes over four games, that, definitely, was bad enough.

Once and for all: Kiki Williams is not a freshman. The freshman label is the breaking point. Do not call her that, she does not want to hear it. She is in her second year, she walks Berkeley without a map, has her own thoughts on Telegraph Avenue ("Good food and shopping") and knows how to register for classes. She is, most definitely, a sophomore.

Except the NCAA calls her a freshman. Well, freshman*, in the same way that Roger Maris' home run record stood for so long at 61*. That's what the dreaded * tells us: there's always an argument to be made for another label.

After inking a deal to join the Golden Bears in November of 1999, big things were expected early of Williams. Her resume spoke for itself. Twice the Marin County Athletic League Player of the Year, Williams averaged 22.1 points and about 10 rebounds in her senior season. That season, she was voted Terra Linda's MVP, as well as being named the San Francisco Examiner All-Metro Regional Player of the Year. She once scored 44 points against one of her school's top rivals, which still ranks among the most memorable moments of her sports career.

Oh yeah, she made the honor roll, too.

Despite playing at the power forward spot in high school, it was naturally assumed that Williams would move back towards the three-point line.

"She's multitalented and very versatile," then-Cal coach Marianne Stanley said when Williams came aboard. "At 6-foot-1, when she gets a mismatch, we can post her up, and she's got the ball-handling and shooting skills to play from the perimeter." Stanley also went on to say that she believed Williams would step in and play, not redshirt, her first season.

But then came time to play the games, and No. 30 was conspicuously absent from the floor.

Williams missed the first nine games of the 2000-01 season with a stress fracture in her right tibia. At this point, she had not elected to redshirt because it was believed that she could come back and play the latter half of the season. After only managing three points and playing sparingly in four games, the coaching staff decided enough was enough. Williams took a medical redshirt, and began to focus on the next season.

"It was frustrating," recalled Williams.

Williams spent the summer at school, attending classes and rehabbing her injured leg, while her team graduated seven seniors and returned only one starter (F/C Ami Forney). With seven freshmen and four sophomores on Cal's 16-player roster, Williams, the freshman*, was all of a sudden thrown into a leadership role.

"Since I'm an upperclassman already, I've got to go out there and lead," said Williams.

The results, thus far, have been impressive. In the 74-60 season-opening victory against San Diego State, Williams took an opportunity created when forward Amber White fouled out with over 11 minutes left on the clock. She keyed a 19-7 run that put the nail in the Aztec coffin, putting up seven points for the Bears, finishing with a total of 15 points on the day. Two days later, the Bears were down 69-53 at Cal Poly with just over two minutes remaining in the game. Williams stepped it up again, sinking two clutch three pointers in an astounding 18-0 sprint to help lead the Bears over the stunned Mustangs, 71-69.

The move outside doesn't seem to have affected her game, either. Williams is Cal's top reserve this season, averaging 5.7 points and 3.4 rebounds per game. She also has eight starts under her belt, in part from filling in for injured freshman and roommate, Leigh Gregory, in December.



Kiki Williams is a leader and role model for a young women's basketball team, despite being called a freshman

"I play everything," said Williams. "I am more of a post player, but I am starting to get more comfortable playing on the outside."

Just don't call her a freshman. That position, Williams isn't comfortable with.