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Basketball: Odessa College's Wade is enjoying return from ACL injury

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LEE SCHEIDE

KEVIN BUEHLER | OA

Odessa College's Carlo Wade is having a strong sophomore season after missing all of last year with a torn ACL. The Levelland graduate has become a key leader on this version of the Lady Wranglers.

Odessa College's Carlo Wade knew that something was wrong with her right knee.

Just three games into the 2008-09 season, Wade was injured during a tournament game at Trinity Valley, but though she was hurt, the extent of the injury wouldn't be revealed until the Lady Wranglers returned home.

There, the news was nothing but bad.

"I knew that I had torn something, but I thought it was my meniscus," Wade said. "Then they told me it was my ACL and that my season was over."

The news was devastating for Wade, who hadn't missed playing basketball since joining the Little Dribblers program growing up in Levelland.

A standout at Levelland High School, Wade was a member of the 2007 Texas Girls Coaches Association All-Star team for 1A-2A-3A classifications and someone that Odessa College coach Ara Baten, in his first year at the helm of the program, was surprised to find still available as he began recruiting to rebound the Lady Wranglers' roster after their championship run in 2006-07.

"Carlo is a very good basketball player from a very, very good high school program," Baten said. "She had a coach (Terri White) who is one of the best coaches in West Texas, so Carlo was schooled in all the fundamentals at both ends of the court and understands what you are trying to teach offensively and defensively.

"She had worked so hard between the end of her freshman year to the beginning of her sophomore season that she had earned a spot in the starting lineup before she got hurt. Without a doubt, she had made the biggest improvement of any player I've coached and it was a shame to see her get hurt."

So instead of working out with her teammates, Wade underwent surgery and then began the rehabilitation process that would get her back on the court for the 2009-2010 season. Some told her six to nine months for recovery time, she was back in three after doctors created a new ACL with a piece of her hamstring.

Wade still wasn't 100 percent, however, and when she suffered another slight tear in another ligament early this season, the frustration of not being able to do what she used to created some difficult times for the sophomore.

"It was frustrating, because I lost a step and couldn't cut the way I wanted and I was down, mentally," Wade said. "But my teammates really helped me get through it and I'm happy they did because I still love playing basketball."

The Lady Wranglers love having her on the court and they'll need Wade's experience the rest of the way through the Western Junior College Athletic Conference schedule, starting at 5:45 tonight against Howard College at the OC Sports Center.

Odessa College comes into the game 18-3 overall and 2-2 in conference, having lost its last two games in the final minute against South Plains last Thursday and New Mexico JC on Monday.

Wade acknowledges that tonight's contest is a big one for the Lady Wranglers.

"Against South Plains, we had chances to take control in the second half and didn't do it and then against New Mexico, the press bothered us a little and we turned the ball over too much," she said. "But we still had a chance to win both games, so that's what we have to take into this game against Howard because they are very good.

"We have a very good team this year and we're getting better. We just need to take care of the basketball and we'll be all right."

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