

SHS graduates headed to Rose Bowl

By **Charlie Kanzig**
Correspondent

A pair of Sisters High School graduates will fly south with the Oregon Ducks for the 2019 Rose Bowl against Wisconsin as workers for the U of O football program.

Thomas Arends (2009) has worked with the Ducks program since his freshman year in college in 2009. His current job title is director of player personnel and pro liaison.

Maggie Bidasolo, a junior at Oregon, was selected earlier this month as one of four interns with the program to assist during the Rose Bowl week.

Arends got on as an intern with the Ducks as a freshman in the fall of 2009 under Head Coach Chip Kelly. When Kelly left in 2012 for the NFL, Arends was hired full-time by his successor, Mark Helfrich, which lasted through the 2015 season. When Helfrich's job was terminated, Arends was also let go, but fortunately picked up a similar job as an associate director of player personnel at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. In the fall of 2018, he got to return to Eugene under current Head Coach Mario Cristobal as the director of player personnel.

He joked, "It's not often you get fired and a year later you come back and get promoted."

Both former Outlaws are lifelong Duck fans. Arends graduated from U of O in 2012 and Bidasolo is in her third year as a sports business major. She has attended all but four Duck home football games since her birth. Her parents Mo and Mike Bidasolo took her to her first game when she was six weeks old.

The two see one another from time to time and even worked on a Pro Day together earlier this year. "Our families have actually been friends for a long time," she said.

Bidasolo began her work with the team during her freshman year as an intern with the Oregon Football Ambassadors. "We are the face of the Oregon 'brand' for donors, season ticket-holders, and Nike executives serving as hosts and tour guides of the facilities," she said.

She is now deeply involved in event planning for the program, including acting as chair of the Marcus Mariota golf tournament and the Special Events and Projects program.

On game days she works on special events as well. "In my role, I assist and plan all the events surrounding the Xs and Os on gameday. Some examples of events I have planned and worked are NFL Pro Day, Spring Game,

Womens Clinic, Coaches Clinic, Senior Day, and many others," she said.

As far as being selected as one of four interns to travel with and serve the team during the Rose Bowl, she explained, "Through all of these experiences, I have built relationships with a lot of the coaching staff. On December 12, I received a text from Head Coach Mario Cristobal's assistant asking about my winter break plans. She explained that they wanted to bring four interns to the Rose Bowl as operation assistants to help with all the events taking place during the week leading up to the game and wanted to know if I would be interested. Of course, I immediately said 'Yes!'"

All of her experiences with the team relate directly to her chosen academic major in sports business. "I am getting real-world experience in the industry and building my network," she said.

This Rose Bowl will not be her first trip to Pasadena for the game.

"This really is a dream job opportunity for me," she said. "The Rose Bowl, 'The granddaddy of them all,' is a special event to my family. I have

been to every Rose Bowl the Ducks have played in since I was born. I am looking forward to getting a behind-the-scenes look at what all it takes for a team to be there and all of the hard work the coaching staff and employees have to put in beforehand just to make it to the stadium on game day."

In California, Bidasolo will serve as an operations assistant.

"The Rose Bowl is not just a game, it's a week-long event," she explained. "There will be a world of events from big dinners to team outings (maybe even Disneyland) that are going to take a lot of coordination and planning to execute smoothly. I get to fly on the team plane and stay at the team hotel all week."

For Arends, the Rose Bowl itself is a bit of a break in the frenetic pace of his normal job, which is especially busy this time of year due to the early signing period for recruits taking place while the team is simultaneously preparing for the Rose Bowl.

To give a hint as to how rushed coaches and other personnel are at this time of the season, Coach Cristobal celebrated only briefly with his



PHOTO PROVIDED

Thomas Arends with Nike co-founder Phil Knight.

team after beating Utah in the Pac 12 Championship game before having to leave on a recruiting visit scheduled for the next morning.

"At the Rose Bowl I just get to be a number-one fan as much as anything..." Arends said.

Arends, the son of Susan and Phil Arends, both of Sisters, has had a passion for football since a young age — he played for the Outlaws during high school — and was

known to be the announcer for freshman and junior varsity games as a student.

Arends looks forward to his upcoming week in Pasadena. "I am on the team charter, staying at the team hotel, watching practicing and hanging out with the guys," he said. "I am in a unique role that I actually get to develop relationships with these young guys. It's going to be a lot of fun, and then it will be back to a lot of busy work weeks."

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