

## Hitting also questionable as diamond season opens

## Pitching problems plague hardballers

By JOHN ANDERSON  
Of The Emerald

"If we're going to have any kind of season at all," mused Oregon baseball Coach Don Kirsch, "we're going to have to play smart, never-give-up baseball and keep pecking away for runs. We're in real trouble if we don't."

Kirsch, entering his 22nd season as diamond mentor with the record of never having had a losing campaign, doesn't expect an easy season. And the Ducks, who were 22-15 last year, start it off tough next week, opening a 41-game slate with a six-game vacation trip to California.

Beginning March 24, the Webfoots will meet six opponents in six days—UC Davis, Santa Clara, Fresno State, San Jose State, San Francisco and California. They return home April 3 for five games in three days—doubleheaders against Portland State and Lewis and Clark, and a single game Friday with Oregon College of Education.

**Strong defensive**

Oregon's Ducks should be a strong group defensively. But there are two other departments which may be less than satisfactory—pitching and hitting. The vacation swing will tell a lot.

Oregon had an efficient mound staff last year, but gone since then are four of the six men who started with some regularity. Mike Nicksic (9-1, 2.10) and Joe Kniser (2-1, 0.45) have graduated; Larry Hayes (2-1, 2.58) signed a professional contract with the San Francisco Giants; and Eric Olson (3-0, 0.99) is passing up the year to concentrate on his studies in preparation for medical school.

So the weight will be on the shoulders of junior Fred Cardwell and senior Jon Wheeler. Wheeler, the mainstay of the staff as a sophomore when he was 5-2 with a 1.44 earned run average, had an off-season last year and finished only 3-7, 3.84. He has struck out 138 men in 138 innings over two years. Kirsch expects a comeback season from the Newport product.

And Cardwell, a big Canadian with a sharp fastball, will have to hold up the other end

of the roof. He was 3-4 last season with a 2.76 ERA.

Gary Schutz, Hodgon Award Winner as a sophomore outfielder but victim of a season-long slump a year ago, has moved to the pitching rubber for his senior year and has exhibited a good fastball and sharp curve in intrasquad games.

Three other veterans also return, all of them juniors. Fred Masser (0-0, 1.89) saw relief action in nine games last season. He'll probably work in the bullpen again this year. Jack Delaney (0-0, 3.46) and Dave Anderson (0-1, 9.00) hurled a total of 6 1/3 innings between them.

Much of the pitching for this year's club will come from five sophomores and a junior college transfer. Sophomores John Charno (2-0, 1.80) and Greg Hollen (4-1, 3.75) are the only lefthanders on the squad. Right-handers Alan Cockerill (2-1, 1.37), John Masters (3-2, 3.03) and Rick Mealey (3-2, 1.14) are also expected to contribute.

Nick Zeidler, a transfer from Santa Monica City College in California, "is not too big, but he throws pretty good," according to Kirsch.

**Dye has edge**

A three-way battle rages for the number one catching slot, but at this time veteran John Dye may have the edge over sophomores Dave Dingman and Don Knapp. Dye hit .293 last season as a part-time starter and handled 152 fielding chances flawlessly.

A quartet of lettermen return in the infield, but there will be a tough fight for three of four positions.

Colby Howe a powerful third baseman from Tiburon, Calif., started all but one of the Duck games as sophomore last year at the hot corner of the infield. He batted only .240, but hit well for distance, as among his 31 hits were nine doubles, two triples and two home runs. Howe, as a matter of fact, is the only Webfoot who has hit a varsity homer.

Across the infield grass, at first base, transplanted catcher Steve Arnold, a two-year vet-

eran, is trying to fight off transfer Bob Ossey for the starting job. Arnold, a fine defensive player, hit only .185 last year but showed power at times. Ossey, a junior in eligibility, is a southpaw.

A four-way fight exists in mid-infield, where junior lettermen Roger Schiewe at second and Jim Van Wyck at short are being pressed by sophomores Gary Nall and Bob Main. Van Wyck batted at a solid .273 pace last year and will probably beat out Main. Schiewe, who hit only .229 after a fast start, may have trouble holding off Nall, who led the Frosh with a .357 batting mark.

**Platooning possible**

In the outfield, Kirsch has plenty to choose from, and has suggested the possibility of platooning his squad depending on the pitching opposition. At this point senior Larry Hand and sophomores Earle Wicklund and Dick Whitman stand on top of the pile, but a number of other fine players including returnees Rod Pitcher and Jerry Knutson and sophomores Dave Johnson, Bill Lawrence and Mike Balkovich, are waiting in the folds should any of the top three slump.

Wicklund, who hit .333 for the Frosh stole 17 bases, is a fine defensive player and may be one of the fastest the Ducks have ever had.

Whitman rapped the ball at a .328 pace last year and Hand hit .265 as a varsity starter after seeing limited action as a first-year man.

Some help may come from Phil Bushman, a junior from Mt. Hood Community College. "He is real fast, good defense and is a good hitter," said Kirsch.

The one big loss for the Webfoots in the hitting department was infielder Larry Hanson. The Portland player was a two-time All-American hitting .328 last year after a .395 sophomore season during which he

led the Pacific-8 in hitting. Hanson signed with the California

Angels shortly after the end of the 1968 college season.



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## Duck tennis team faces trip south

Coach Buzz Summer's tennis team opens its 1969 season March 23 with the Berkeley Tennis Club, the beginning of a six dual match trip to California.

With a nucleus of junior Ron Zielinski, senior Barry Sterett, junior Chuck Fritz and sophomore Rick Wilson, Oregon's tennis team faces California, Foot-hill College, Sacramento State College, Stanford and Florida in addition to the Berkeley Tennis Club in its five-day slate south.

The Ducks open their home schedule April 4 with a dual encounter with Oregon State.

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