

Still kicking

A swim team fights for breath



Unless you've seen Ron Hunt advertising Duck Bucks, Greg Ballard selling football programs or Don Read carting his squad to away games in a Winnebago, consider the Oregon swim team unique.

Last spring Don Van Rossen's \$42,000 swim budget was completely axed, though the administration decided to retain it on a "self-perpetuating basis."

Still, it appeared the wet head was dead.

"I was bitter," said Van Rossen, "So bitter that I was seriously considering quitting."

"But over the summer I woke up to some things. People gave me some ideas to make money for the program. And I decided we'd go for it."

Quickly, Van Rossen went to work. He secured a contract for the swim team to sell football programs and initiated the Duck Buck plan — an arrangement sponsored by McDonald's which gives the swim team fifty cents on every Duck Buck spent at McDonald's.

In addition, he set up a clinic in Vancouver, Wash. And looked into cost-cutting plans like driving to away meets in a mobile home and having the Daisy Ducks pack the team lunches to save money on motels and restaurants.

The coup de grace, however, didn't sprout until yesterday. Van Rossen went jogging with Capt. Al Jones, yep, the same Capt. Al Jones who has run 200 miles non-stop and swam 500 miles from the Snake River to the mouth of the Columbia.

By the time it was over, Van Rossen was gasping for air and Jones had agreed to shoot for an unorthodox world's swim record in Leighton Pool — benefits going to the Oregon swim program.

Hands tied, feet shackled, Jones will attempt an endurance record with Oregon's John McChonocie the competition.

"We think we can make \$6,000 on it," Van Rossen said.

Van Rossen believes the swim team can get by on \$15,000 this year, about one-third of last year's budget. "The swim team itself can make six to eight thousand," he said.

The team gets 15 cents from every football program sold. So far, it's nearly doubled last year's average sales, making \$930 in two games. Duck Bucks have netted \$730 and cleaning Autzen Saturday will bring in \$1,200, boosting their total to nearly \$3,000.

Better yet, the dividends are not only financial.

"We've never been closer as a team," said swimmer Tom Phipps. "Working together to make money has done away with all the individualism."

"It's given everybody a feeling of identity," said Van Rossen. "At last, everyone is seeing they're really important to the program. Not just the top swimmers; everybody."

The clinic should bring in about \$1,000. The rest will hopefully come from donations.

Van Rossen, obviously, opposes doing away with scholarships. Only six swimmers are receiving aid now; none of them is getting room and board.

"If we do away with scholarships it'll sever the most vital link we've got between the public and the university," he said. "People want a chance to help Oregon swimming and they should be able to contribute."

If Van Rossen has evolved into half-coach, half-businessman, there's a reason.

"Athletics are important," he said. "They're a chance to shoot for excellence, to work with other people, to become better people."

"And we've got five guys who've already qualified for the NCAA meet in Rhode Island. It'll cost \$6,000 to get them back there but I hope we can do it. Remember, these guys have been working 16-18 years to get into a meet like that."

Saturday, the swim team will work about 16 hours straight selling programs and cleaning Autzen Stadium.

"The guys have been working their fannies off," said Van Rossen. "And not one guy has quit the program, even though I've told them we'll be busy every weekend until March either working or swimming."

"It keeps the guys humble, makes them realize swimming is a privilege, not something you're forced into," said Van Rossen. "And it's helped our image. People are realizing that swimmers aren't all jocks and egotists. I think people are developing a lot of respect for us."

Van Rossen is benefiting too.

"I've never had so much fun coaching before," he said. "It used to be everything revolved around the win-loss thing. Now there's a new warmth to the team. It has taste, quality."

"Maybe it's a pride kind of thing, but we're going to make it."

And next year?

Van Rossen smiled and crossed his fingers.

'The Pit' to host NCAA playoffs

The first round of the post-season NCAA basketball playoffs will be held at the University of Oregon's McArthur Court on March 13. Oregon last hosted the event in 1963.

The doubleheader will feature games involving the champions of the Pacific-8 Conference, the Pacific Coast Athletic Association and the Big Sky Conference, as well as an at-large selection.

First round winners advance to the Western Regional Tournament at UCLA's Pauley Pavilion March 18-20.

Finals and semi-finals will be held March 27 and 29 in Philadelphia.

4-year field hockey vet

Briggs keeps on stick'n

By JEFF NIELSON
Of the Emerald

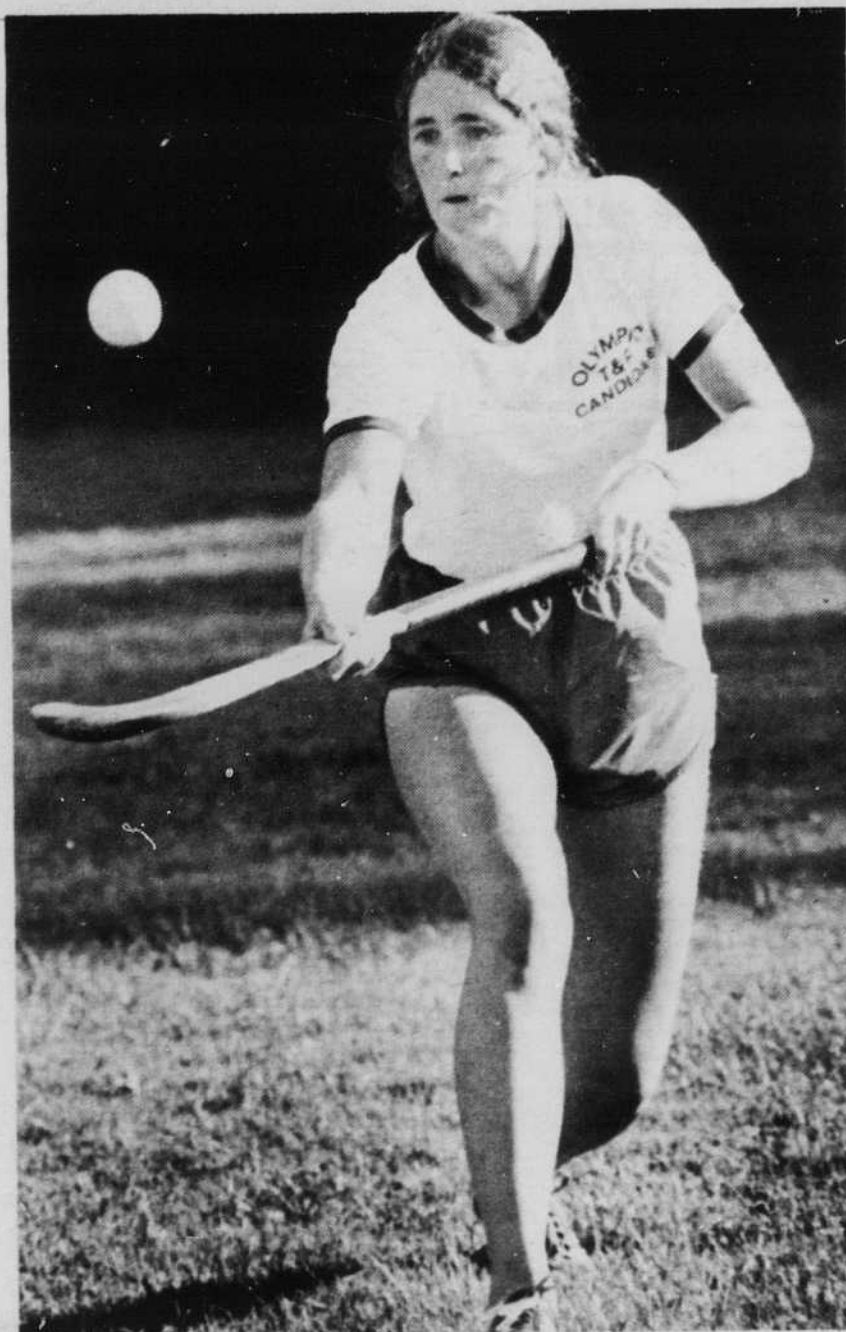


Photo by Warren Morgan

Shelley Briggs

Shelley Briggs is someone coaches like to call a natural athlete.

Besides being a four-year varsity field hockey player for Oregon and current president of the hockey club, the 21-year-old native of Eugene is a member of the National Ski Patrol and a former J.V. tennis player.

The only reason Briggs doesn't compete in either intercollegiate sports is that she found out after her spell as a tennis player that, "academic work and field hockey were enough to worry about."

For Briggs, who's been playing field hockey since her sophomore year at South Eugene High School, this season's beginning practice has proved to be a little tougher than in years past. The reason: more interest in field hockey at Oregon than ever before.

"When I was a freshman, we didn't even have enough people out for two complete squads," said Shelley. "This year, 38 girls came out for the team. You've really got to fight to hang on to that starting spot."

Pressure is no newcomer to Briggs. In her three years of field hockey play at South Eugene, the varsity team lost only one game, a non-counter against a private school. When graduation came, she and hockey teammates Diane Smith and Stacey Mellem ended up at UO in the program under coach Becky Sisley.

"The only other school I looked at was Oregon State," Briggs said. "Stacey, Diane and I didn't plan to come to Oregon together. It just happened that way."

But planned or not, the three veterans from South Eugene now form the nucleus for what the captain calls "the best team I've been on."

And, with national competition in Virginia becoming a reality for the first time this year, enthusiasm is running high.

"This year, I've really learned what it was to be dedicated to a sport," said Briggs. "Sisley picked a deliberately hard schedule to toughen us up. There's a positive mental attitude happening on the squad. It's unique — we're all very close."

She also cited increased student support as another factor that has helped the team.

"Support has increased in the past few years," said Briggs. "The program has grown a lot. We've now got money to travel, and the thought of going to nationals is exciting. Four years ago, the possibility of going across the country would have been unthinkable."

For Briggs, an even more unthinkable action would be to give up the game she played so long.

Does she have any post-graduate plans? The Olympics, for one — as a spectator.

"Right now, my plan is to travel next year and end up in Montreal at the end of July," Shelley said. "After that, I imagine I'll get a job somewhere. And hopefully play for a club team."

"It's much too soon to hang up my stick."

First woman recruiter successful because 'I relate to them'

By MARY BETH BOWEN
Of the Emerald

Southern California football coach John McKay says she has an unfair advantage.

"They just send her down here and she charms them into signing."

The University of Washington Sports Information Director, Don Smith agrees that she is "charming" — in fact she's one of the biggest assets we've got. She's a mother-sister-best friend all rolled into one.

They're talking about Gertrude Peoples — the first woman football recruiter in American sports history and one of the shining lights of the University of Washington's Athletic Department.

She insists that charm has nothing to do with her recruiting success. "I'm old enough to be the mother of any kid I'm trying to recruit," she laughs. "I just relate to them."

Peoples was in Eugene Friday for the Oregon-Washington game.

Black, in her forties and the mother of three, she is a rarity in the male dominated world of football.

Her age comes as a shock, because she looks 25.

Besides recruiting athletes, she also does academic advising. The key to her job, she says, is communication.

"I relate to the kids. I'm sort of a surrogate mother to them — especially during freshman year. They're homesick; they don't know what's going on. They need somebody to talk to and that's what I'm there for."

She says being a woman is a definite advantage.

"You're easier to talk to. They don't have to be superman — they can just be themselves. If they're scared, they can show it. With a man they wouldn't."

Peoples says that recruiting is a lot more than just convincing the athletes. She has to convince their parents too.

"Usually the parents don't trust the coaches. I have to assure them that the University of Washington cares about their kid as a person and a student — not just an athlete who'll win the games all season."

The students she works with at the University of Washington think she's great. So do her fellow staff workers in the athletic department. But her male competitors in the recruiting field aren't so enthused about her.

"I went to San Francisco this last recruiting season to visit high schools and they just brushed past me like I didn't exist," she said. "They knew who I was because everybody knows who the other schools are. They just tend to discredit your credibility a bit because you're a woman."