

Goodbye, Don

We're gonna miss you



More than ever, it seems like nice guys finish last. Don Read is a nice guy. He didn't win as many games as John McKay or Tommy Prothro, but nobody could ever accuse him of being a hard man to work with.

"He always came into the office with a smile, Monday after Monday, even when we'd lose by so much," said an athletic department secretary who asked to remain nameless. "A lot of coaches would have gotten down on people, and try and blame somebody. Not Don."

But now, it will be a new face coming in every Monday morning — and next year, the head coach might not be smiling as much. This season, at one point, the Ducks were 3-1. Next season, it will take a herculean effort to equal that, for Georgia, Wisconsin and Louisiana State, three of the four Oregon non-conference opponents, aren't kicking-around material.

Texas Christian, the fourth was ranked in the notorious "bottom ten" this year, but one patsy out of 11 games is definitely not an easy schedule.

And that, in the end, is what hung Read. He still has many campus backers now, but how many people would continue to support him if the Ducks were 1-5 or 0-6 next October? His own mother would be calling for his scalp, and the only spectators in Autzen Stadium would be the band.

A new coach. A new system. A fresh hope. That, believes Athletic Director John Caine and University Pres. William Boyd, is what will save the football program — and other athletic teams.

You see, football and basketball, like it or not, are the Big Brothers on this campus. They're the two sports that bring in the income. And McArthur Court can't be stuffed with any more fans, so that forces Autzen to take up the slack.

That doesn't mean every game has to be a sellout.

"If we could get 30,000 people for each home game, we'd be breaking even," Boyd has stated. "If we can get 35,000, we'd have a comfortable budget to make some needed improvements."

Read knows the hazards and thrills of coaching. The hazards of the Pacific-8 got him, but he'll go out like the gentleman he is.

And the new coach? He'll have to get spectators into Autzen. The administration will give him a couple of years — nobody expects a first-year man to win — but he won't have much more than that. Oregonians, and for that matter, Eugonians, don't like losers. This is a sports town in a sports state, and pressure is the name of the game.

It's a vicious circle. To draw fans, Oregon must at least look competitive. With winning, especially in this conference, comes fringe benefits like TV money and increased donor support.

Nevertheless, there are several coaches out there who would love to come to this University. Tony Kopay, the offensive coordinator at Oregon State, has applied for the job. Rumors about newly-fired Tennessee head coach Bill Battle have been flying around for weeks. And he finished 1976 with a record of 6-5. Rich Brooks, now an assistant coach at UCLA who was a defensive halfback and second-string quarterback to OSU All-American Terry Baker in 1963, has expressed interest in the challenge.

But you don't get proven winners like Battle for \$28,000 dollars, which was the amount Read's contract was worth in its final year. A coach in Oregon football probably spends that much a year on Alka-Seltzer.

There has to be somebody out there who can do it. Right now, the fans don't even get angry anymore when the Ducks lose, for when it comes to the gridiron, Oregon's name means "joke." In an interview with the Dallas, Texas, Morning News last week, O.J. Simpson tried to explain Buffalo's losing record.

"We're 2-8 now," he said, "... but we've played good football. We're not Oregon."

In a Ranier Beer commercial that's airing these days, Mickey Rooney implores former Washington coach Jim Owens to not take their bottle-catching mission too lightly. "We're not playing the Ducks this weekend," remarks Rooney with mock seriousness. Owens laughs.

No, Oregon needs a coach that can bring the pride back. Craig Fertig isn't winning in Corvallis, but after beating California, the fans at least think the Beavers have a fighting chance. So they attend games.

Caine has said a successor will be chosen "quickly." A good person is needed.

For it's goodbye, Don, thank you for giving it your best shot. Hello, new coach — you're going to have a lot of eyes watching you.

Badminton: misunderstood sport?

By CHRIS NORMAN
Of the Emerald

Shedding badminton of its played-with-little-brothers-and-sisters-in-the-backyard-image is no easy task, but the Badminton Club seems ready for the challenge.

Although badminton's popularity isn't "zooming," people are taking a second glance at it because of its emphasis on physical fitness, because it can be a life-time sport and because it's co-ed, said Tom Berkey, coordinator of the club.

Club member Tom Bodley added, "Badminton is in a phase

quiring finesse instead of brute strength.

To break badminton's stereotyped mold and expose more people to the sport, the club "scrimmaged" during halftime of the Stanford-Oregon basketball game two years ago, Berkey said.

Bodley joked that the Mac Court audience is probably the largest crowd the club ever performed before, or ever will.

The club would like to play again in Mac Court during a basketball game, but the University students have all the student seating, leaving no seats for the half-time entertainment.

For added exposure, Berkey would like to send a women's badminton team to the collegiate nationals at Arizona State, which would enhance the club's notoriety. Yet, the money allotted through club sports is only enough to participate either in the regular season or go to the nationals — not both.

"We could send a pretty strong team down to Arizona State, maybe one of the top five in the country," Berkey said.

Listening to the coordinator, though, Eugene could easily be one of the building blocks toward changing badminton's image. The city used to have a junior badminton program that ranked in the top six of the nation, but it "withered away" about six years ago.

Berkey says Eugene is still one of the better known badminton sites on the West Coast, though,

and maybe even in the country.

To promote badminton locally, the club has joined the University's physical education department in sponsoring a co-ed badminton tournament for Oregon high schools.

The club encourages students, faculty and staff to watch or practice with the club every Wednesday night in Gerlinger Annex. Call the club sports office for more information (686-3705).

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just prior to what has happened to soccer."

"It's popular in Asia and Europe, and just now is beginning to be taken up here. The U.S. is at the bottom of the badminton hierarchy," he said.

Competitive badminton isn't the "patty-cake" game some people envision, but an arduous sport re-

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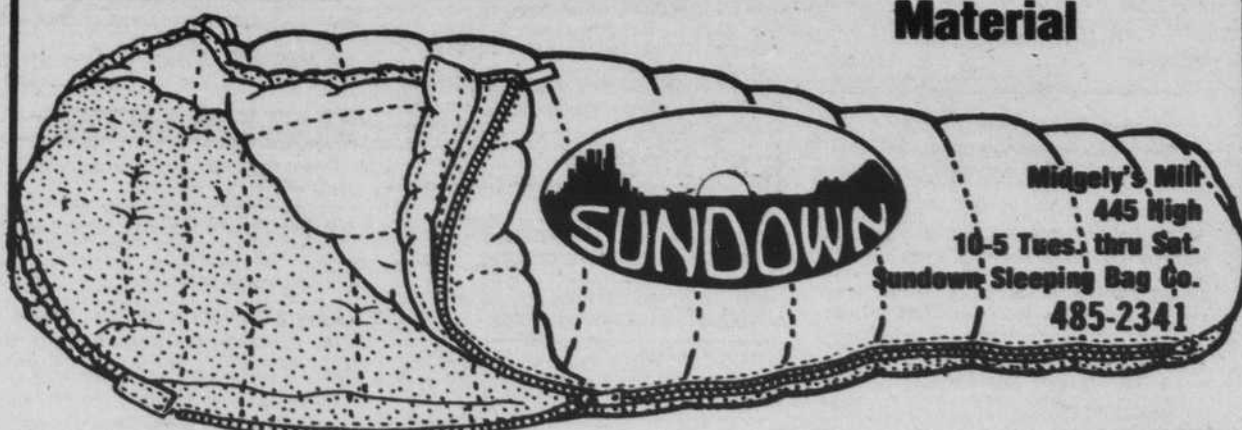


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Women's soccer sets games

Oregon's women's soccer team has scheduled two games for this weekend. Saturday, the squad will meet OSU in Corvallis, while at 6 p.m. Sunday, visiting Humboldt State will meet the Ducks in Autzen Stadium.

The team is 10-1 after the Husky Tournament in Seattle last weekend.