

duck head

For better or worse, he's no ordinary Duck

By NEIL GRUENFELDER
Of the Emerald

Ray Byers is no ordinary duck. True, he can't quack and wobble like a mallard, but he more than makes up for it with his spirited enthusiasm at the Oregon basketball games. Byers is the guy who wears a 5-pound, green, duck head and leads the Kamikaze Kids sprint on to the Mac Court floor.

"Being a duck has its advantages," he said. "The referee can't

hear what you're saying. I'm pretty rude, and I don't have much sympathy for the refs."

Ironically, Byers wanted to be a cheerleader instead of a duck, while last year's mascot, Clyde Hildreth, is now a cheerleader.

"I had an idea to try out for the rally," the 21-year-old native of Salem said, "but they selected me as the duck. I thought it would be a cool thing to do for a year. You get to be out there in front of everybody leading the charge."

Being a duck entails more than

strutting about on courtside two hours each game. Byers practices routines with the rally three hours each week and spends numerous hours traveling to Los Angeles and other cities for away games.

Perspiration from being cooped up is a problem.

"Basically you let it run," he said. "This new one is not as hot as the other one. This one has better ventilation, better visibility and is sturdier."

The new head, constructed by Don Adkins, art teacher at

Roosevelt Junior High School, features a movable pale-orange beak and wider, screened eye slots. It is constructed around a bicycle helmet and the skin of the duck is green-painted fiberglass. The cost for the head "transplant" was \$100.

At 5-2½, Byers resembles a duck so much that youngsters ask him, "are you for real?"

"Sometimes I'll tease them. Sometimes I tell them, 'it's just a head.' It all depends on what mood I'm in," he said. "They like me. They're hip."

According to Byers, the duck spirit at games is down this year over last season.

"The crowd was more into it last year," he said. "Last year you could walk in and feel the power of the people. This year it's different. It's some kind of intangible thing. It could be because the basketball team is not doing that well or because there is no one star. It could be the rally; we might not be as exuberant as we should."

"I think we (rally) are moving in the right direction. We're getting different things for people to look at and get into. We're planning something rude for each game. Intimidation is the name of the game."

When he is not psyching up the

crowd, Byers enjoys drinking a cold beer, living in Oregon, and playing sports. At Central High School in Independence, he participated in football, track, tennis and wrestling, placing sixth in district wrestling his senior year. The past two years, he has spent his fall afternoons on the gridiron playing JV football. At running back, he was known as "the littlest duck," probably because of his stature, not his running.

Despite his favorable disposition and having the best seat in the house at the games, Byers has experienced two regretful incidents. The first occurred when the Washington Huskies journeyed to Autzen Stadium to take on Oregon's football team.

"We were behind 46-0 or 53-0 or something, and we were trying to do a cheer. It was probably not the right time to do it and they (student section) started to boo," he said.

The other incident occurred in Los Angeles where the basketball team lost two Pac-8 games.

"L.A. was terrible," he said. "The air was terrible, it was rainy and there was nothing to do."

It figures. Taking Ray Byers out of Oregon is like taking a duck out of water.

PASSION. MYSTERY. LOVE.

NO WONDER IT WAS
BROADWAY'S BIGGEST PLAY.

NO WONDER IT IS NOW ONE
OF AMERICA'S BIGGEST MOVIES.

EQUUS

Richard Burton
35th Annual
Golden Globe
Award Winner
BEST ACTOR



ELLIOTT KASTNER and LESTER PERSKY present

RICHARD BURTON

in "EQUUS"

PETER FIRTH · COLIN BLAKELY

JOAN PLOWRIGHT · HARRY ANDREWS

EILEEN ATKINS and JENNY AGUTTER

Screenplay by PETER SHAFFER · Based upon the stage play by PETER SHAFFER

Music by RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT · Produced by LESTER PERSKY and ELLIOTT KASTNER

A Dorset-Persky/Bright Feature

Directed by SIDNEY LUMET



ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK ALBUM AND
TAPE AVAILABLE ON UNITED ARTISTS RECORDS

United Artists
A Transamerica Company

NOW SHOWING

WACO TWIN
CINEMA I

FRANKLIN BLVD. & 13th
344-3861

Mon-Sat 7:00-9:35
Sun 1:45-4:20-7:00-9:35

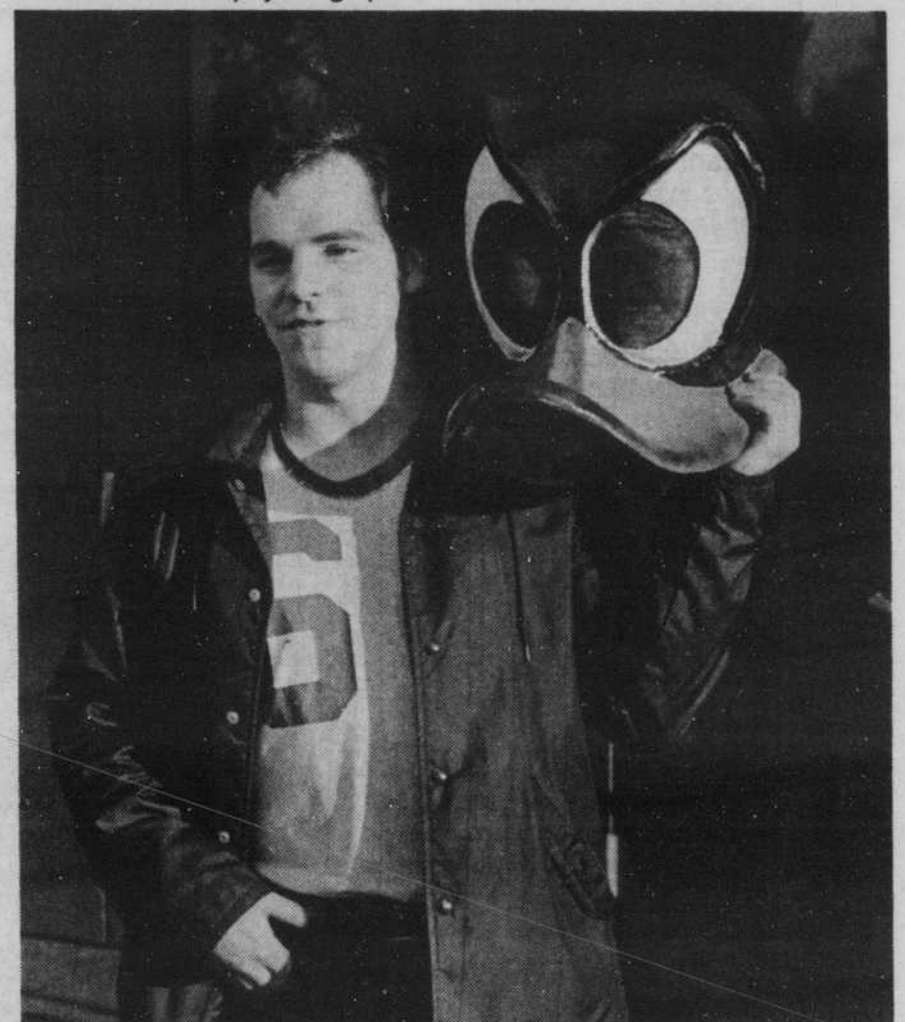


Photo by Mike Baer

Ray Byers has a lot of fun with his duck head, in which he's sometimes mistaken for the real thing. But to the Oregon sports teams, he's more.

Back to Basics

Special

Oregon Daily Supplement

Friday, February 3, 1978