

baseball

Diamond men hope to pick up pieces after last season

By NICK DAWSON
Of the Emerald

Don't think Mel Krause isn't hoping for better.

Last year, Krause's Oregon baseball team suffered through what can only be described as a pathetic season. The Ducks fumbled, bumbled and whiffed their way into the Oregon history books: The first losing season in Duck baseball since 1932.

In the process, the Ducks finished last in the Northern Division of the Pac-8, which, because of the baseball-rich Southern Division, meant the Ducks finished last in the Pac-8 as a whole. And it's no wonder.

They did what they did by having the worst Pac-8 team batting average, the worst team earned run average and, if the league had kept accurate fielding statistics, the Ducks probably would have been on the bottom of the heap in that too.

"We have a lot of proving to do," said Krause.

No kidding!

It's been a couple years since Donny Reynolds, Dean and Dave Roberts, Jim Willis and Guy Krause did their own brand of magic for coach Mel Krause at Howe Field. It was during the years of some of those players that Oregon baseball was something to be reckoned with, if not down-right feared.

And now, Krause is trying to do some rebuilding after the bombing.

First of all, he will have new infields to work with. That's right, infields! At the cost of about

\$5,000, Krause had the Howe Field infield resodded. Hopefully, he said, it will make a difference in the confidence of the second new infield.

The Oregon infield personnel have changed position, if not faces.

Steve Elam, who had his problems at third base last season, will be the new first sacker. Elam is known primarily for his bat, as evidenced by his five home runs and .293 batting average. The other returner to the Duck infield is Jeff Heaton. The sophomore out of South Eugene is slated by Krause to fill the second base spot. He hit .218 last year while alternating between shortstop and third.

Two new faces should anchor the new infield.

Glenn Baggerly will provide a good bat and glove at shortstop. Last year at Mount Hood Community College, Baggerly led the Saints in six offensive categories, including home runs and batting (.360). He was named All-District last year.

Jerry Rinella, a teammate of Baggerly's last year, will play third for Krause's squad. Rinella was named to the second team All-District squad last year with a .310 batting average. He is an above average infielder.

It's in the outfield where Krause can base hopes of a comeback year.

He has his whole starting outfield returning from last year, including sophomore Tom Dodd, who led the Ducks in hitting last year in his rookie season. Dodd was an All-Northern Division choice, sporting a .359 average. He led the Ducks in eight offensive

categories, including home runs with eight, doubles with nine, hits with 46 and runs with 28. "Dodd had a very good year last year," Krause said in summing up his top returner.

Mike Connolly was an All-Northern Division outfielder in 1976 and returns for his senior year. The former Bend star hit .297 for the second consecutive year while hitting two homers. He has an impressive throwing arm from his right field position.

The other returner for the Ducks is sophomore Mike Ritchie. Ritchie hit .282 last year and tied for the team lead in steals at six with Heaton and Connolly.

The battery will prove to be a different matter for Krause.

Four catchers, none with great statistics, are battling for the top spot. Pete Wilkinson (.160), Gig Nelson (.235) and Mike Carr (.143) return from last year, while Kevin Tabler is a candidate off last year's junior varsity.

The pitching staff will be hoping to bring down the 5.27 E.R.A. of last year, the worst in Oregon history.

Glenn Fisher was the best of the group with a 3-6 record and a 2.22 earned run average. Jerry Cunningham, Mike Jordan and Don Mrcovich are other hurlers off last year's squad, while Vic Kelley will return after sitting 1977 out because of ineligibility.

John Lazarich, Doug Strahn, Dean Kegler and Ron Sloy are newcomers that could help Oregon right away.

Krause is hoping the Spring break trip into California will help to answer any unanswered questions.



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Oregon, and Mike Connolly, will hope to pick things up in the 1978 season. Last year the Ducks slumped to 14-27, the first losing season in Duck baseball since 1932. With that finish, the Ducks finished last in the division. Coach Mel Krause is looking for better fielding from a new set of infielders. They will be aided by brand new infield grass installed last fall.



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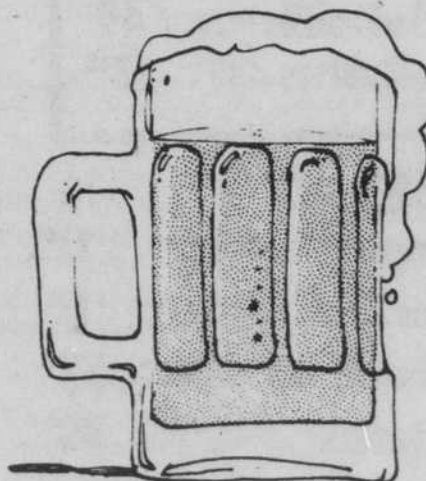


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