



Photo by Steve Schneider

In the heat of the day

Oregon's running back coach Ron Hudson (center) gathers his troops under Monday's hot sun as the Ducks begin spring practice. The offensive backfield will be one of the Duck's stronger points this year, as in addition to the fine freshman recruited in February, Oregon has five lettermen returning. Spring practices continue for a month, and conclude with an alumni game on May 13.

Foli isn't being a brat this time

NEW YORK (AP) — New York shortstop Tim Foli made two errors in a recent game, and his manager smiled. His former manager was impressed.

All this happiness over Foli's errors wasn't because of what the shortstop did. It was for what he didn't do.

He didn't jump up and down in a rage.

He didn't stomp around like a caged bull.

And didn't look for someone to

punch in the mouth.

The 27-year-old Foli is back with the Mets after a six-year banishment to Montreal and San Francisco. And by all indications he's a new man.

"I just decided after eight years it was time to grow up," said Foli, nicknamed "Crazyhorse" by the Mets during his first stint with them.

The nickname no longer seems appropriate.

"I didn't have a good ballgame,"

Foli said Sunday after making two costly errors in the second half of the Mets double-header against Montreal. "But there's always tomorrow. It's a struggle to forget and control my emotions. But I'll do it."

The Mets reacquired Foli, a lifetime .240 hitter, from San Francisco last December, primarily for his glove. What he does with his bat is gravy.

"Timmy knows we're depending on him to play good shortstop," said Mets Manager Joe Torre. "To me he's controlling himself. I saw his two throwing errors, but they're different. They're not like the past when he made errors because he wasn't hitting or he was all riled up. He doesn't remind me of that Tim Foli any more."

Commentary

Football's suiting up in the sunshine

Mike Marino

As crazy as it sounds, while the rest of us were out basking in the sun (well, almost all of us), Autzen Stadium came alive as Oregon football greeted over 80 players for the first day of spring practice.

This year, things have changed as much as they've stayed the same. The focus of Rich Brooks and his staff has not changed - they want to win at Oregon, and they want to win badly.

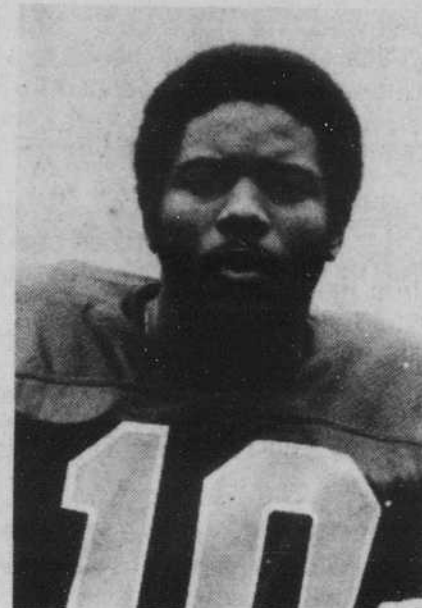
Last year it was the dawning of a new day, and despite the fact that he didn't have the proven talent, Brooks took the position that his team was in the race until someone proved otherwise. Most people knew, though, that the Ducks wouldn't win many. Still, they did have a fine game against Oregon State in the season's finale, and the new day had dawned.

But this year people may not be so patient. There was, granted, a better atmosphere last year, but 2-9 is 2-9.

What makes it tougher is that Oregon lost a few key people. The obvious one is Jack Henderson, gone after four solid years at quarterback. But the biggest concern is probably the defense, and specifically the secondary, where three of four starters (Reggie Grant, David Haynes, Bruce Jensen), have gone.

The football staff knew this, and that's why they went after some top secondary recruits like JC stars Rock Richmond and James Covington.

In addition, the Ducks have made a decision that might, on the surface, seem an odd way to strengthen the defense. Gary Beck, who turned in Oregon's finest rushing performance a year ago with 131 yards against Oregon State, has been switched to free safety. You might think that it's a pretty dumb idea, but if so you've probably forgotten that the Oregon backfield is so loaded this year that Brooks might have to invent a new offensive set that accommodates five or six running backs.



Kenny Bryant
One to count on

"Gary could easily have been a starting running back," said Milt Jackson, Oregon's defensive backfield coach. "But he'd have had some tough competition for that job. He's a starter in the secondary though, and he's needed probably more there."

Beck will be teamed with Kenny Bryant, named as an All-Coast safety last year with four interceptions — one for 97 yards against Texas Christian. Then there's Richmond, the JC All-American who has come to Oregon and just plain taken over.

"The way he is and the things he can do, Rock has already earned the respect of the kids," Jackson said. "He'll probably be the one to electrify people around here returning kicks, getting interceptions and just playing."

Last year, if you'll recall, the secondary had, in Grant, Haynes and Jensen, some good talent, but there were problems. "They didn't have enough competition amongst themselves," Jackson explained. "They didn't work as hard as they could have."

And this year? "This year there will be less mistakes, and more intelligent play," he continued. "And there really will be more competition because all of these guys are guys that you want to play with."

No doubt the competition this spring will breed the desire in the fall. "We will be better," Jackson said, "and we lost three starters. That should give you an idea of how good these guys are."

You know how good Beck is, having played offense and, for a time, defense, last year. "I think we'll hit a lot harder this year," the sophomore said. "I want us to be a lot more physical, and intimidate the receivers."

The secondary will have one strike against them next season due to a rule change that states, simply, that a receiver is still eligible even if he has stepped out of bounds on his route. Hard-hitting defenders won't be able to bump the ends into the water coolers to take them out of the play.

"That might be a problem in the corners," Beck explained. "But I'll probably roam in the middle, and if someone comes through I'm going to knock them down."

Beck will probably be getting back for all the shots he took last year on offense and returning kicks - they say it's more fun to hit than to be hit.

"Nobody thinks that," Beck grinned. "I just want to win, and I know that it's going to start here soon. We have the objective now."

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