

Club soccer status remains 'up in the air'

By KEN SANDS
Of the Emerald

Soccer may be a "kick in the grass," but a lack of "green" is keeping it from being funded by the athletic department.

"John Caine, University athletic director is interested in soccer, but he has a business to run," says Mike Davis, Club Sports soccer coach. "He's as much as told us that with the current financial situation it's impossible for the athletic department to expand."

Though soccer is enjoying a popularity boom, says Caine, it doesn't make sense to spend money for an additional sport when the department has been forced to cut back on the current budget.

Title IX legislation is partly to blame for the cutbacks, adds Caine. Since men's and women's sports must now be funded equally, the men have had to scramble for funds to cover both programs.

"Because of Title IX, it's obvious we would have a difficult time adding any new sports," says Caine.

Greg Robinson, the athletic department's business manager says soccer may have a future in the athletic department — but not for at least three years. "We just expanded our program when we couldn't afford to because of Title IX, and further expansion is extremely unlikely."

Robinson adds the relatively low cost of soccer makes it a possibility for the future, but only if there is financial support from the community. "We cannot lead the way as much as we'd like to.

We've got to wait for the primary and secondary schools to build their programs so that there is community interest."

Davis estimates that the team must raise \$25,000 per year from the community in order to gain athletic department status, but even that may not satisfy Caine. "Caine's concern was that we would be taking away from people who contribute to other sports," says Davis.

If soccer is funded by the athletic department, Davis says he feels the athletic department would benefit. "I think we could get reasonable crowds at our games, and we could definitely attract the best athletes in the state."

Winning programs are built around good athletes and Davis says Oregon would gain prestige from having a winning program. "Just because we've had an organized program we've had some good players, and if we could give scholarships we could become one of the best teams on the West Coast," says Davis.

While it's doubtful soccer will become incorporated into the athletic department in the next few years, Davis says the program will continue to grow as a club sport. "Despite only being a club, we have a pretty good program. One of our players (Scott Meiggs) made it to the Timbers training camp."

Davis admits Meiggs is an exception, and that any hopes of a soccer dynasty lie within — not without — the athletic department.



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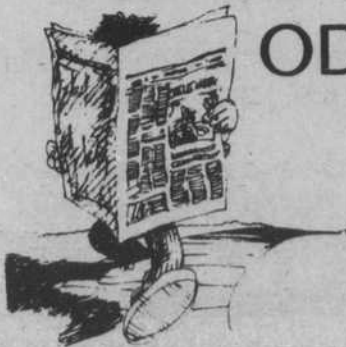
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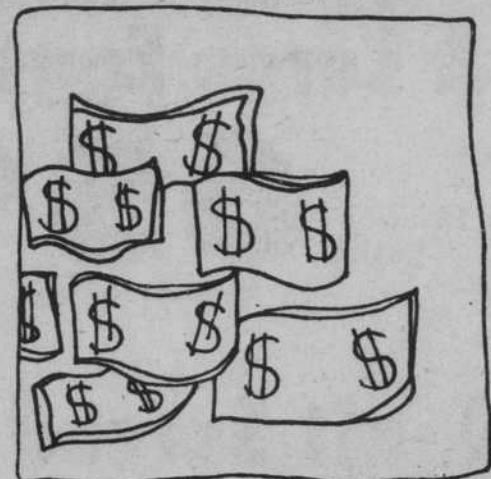
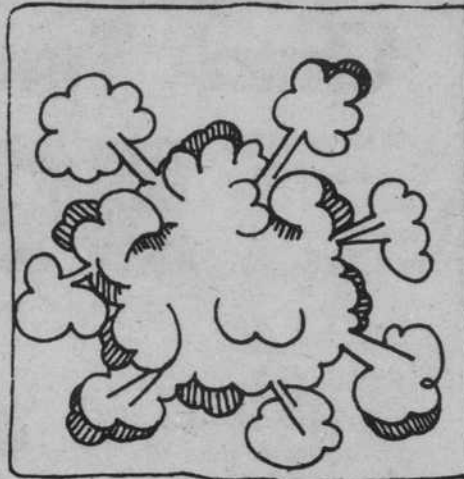
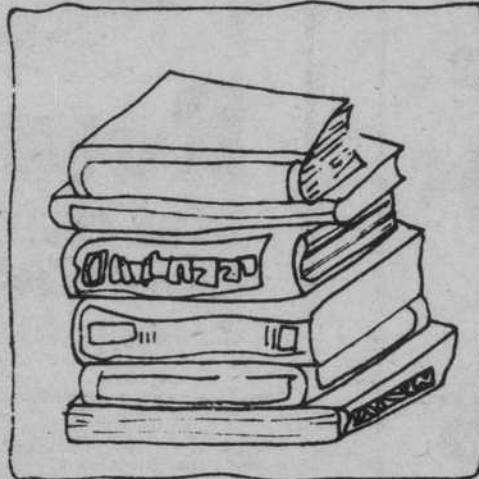
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