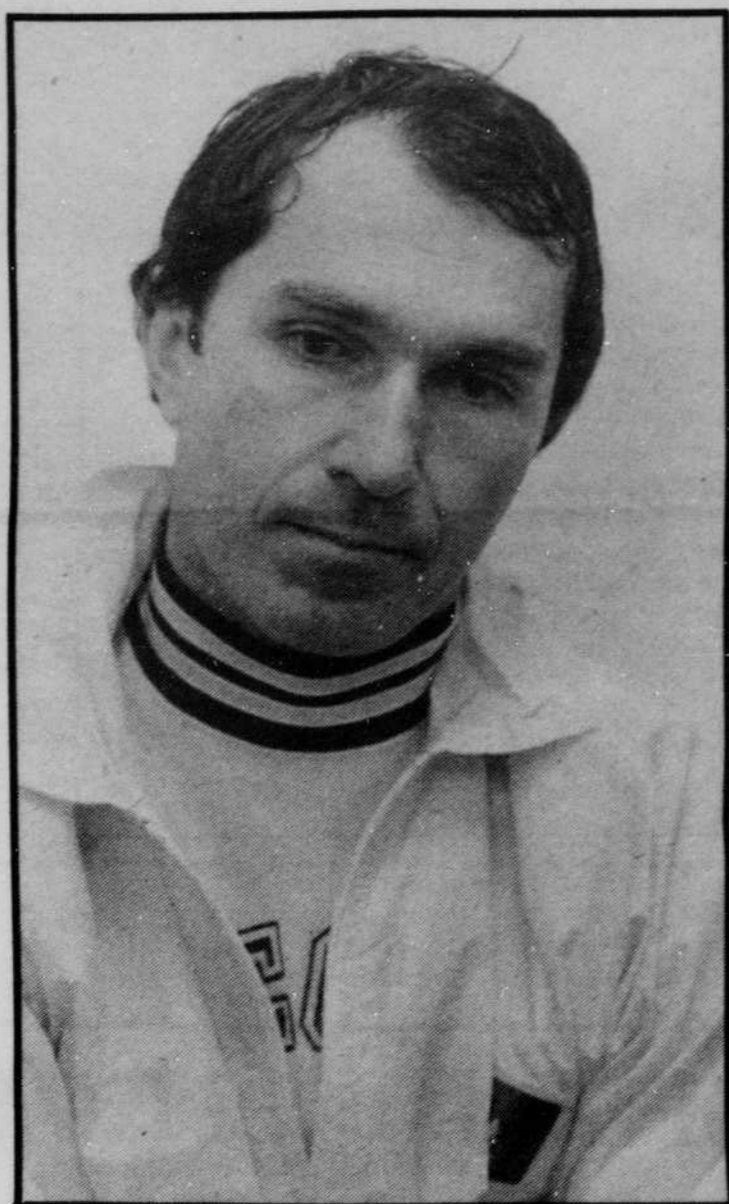
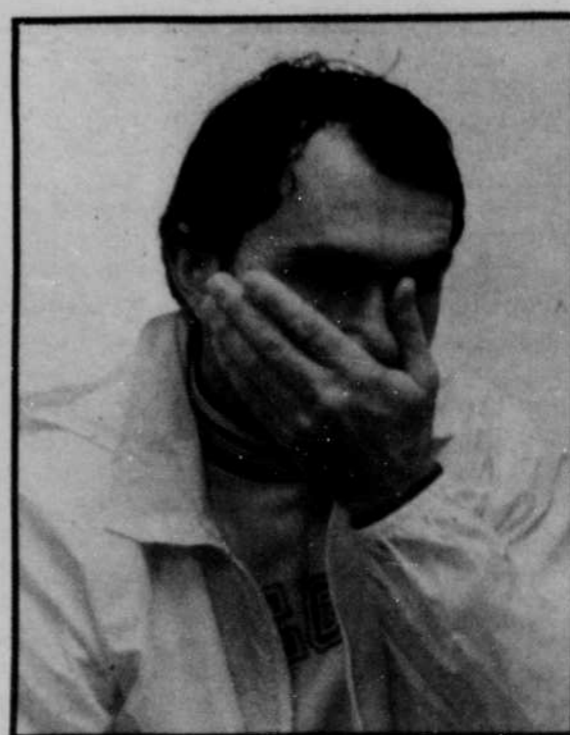
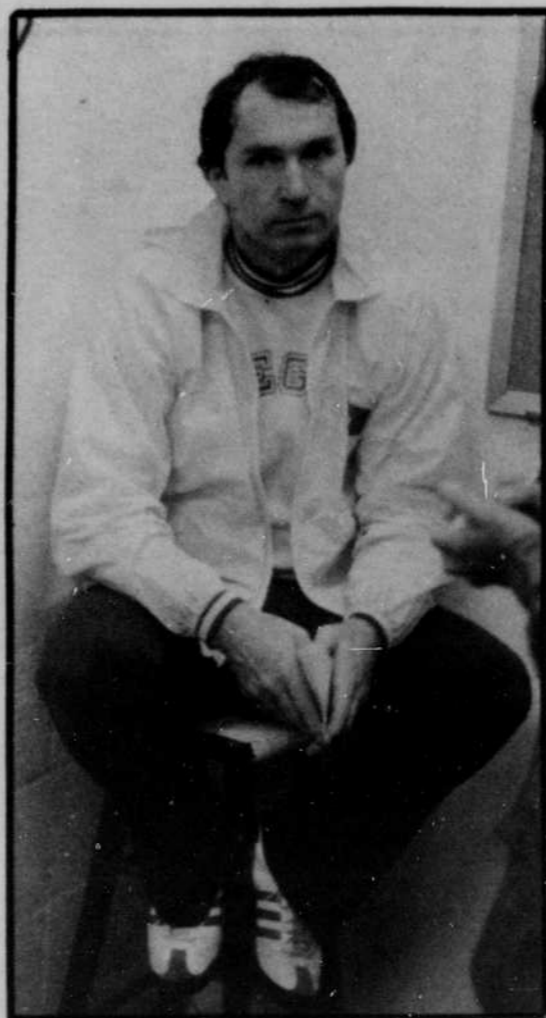


Why Isn't This Man Smiling?

Story by John Healey
Photos by Joe Yogerst



For Oregon, this Saturday's Civil War Game represents a chance to clinch their first winning season since 1970 and redeem themselves after last weekend's blowout by UCLA.

But for the OSU Beavers, this year's Civil War game is the beginning and the end of their entire season. A win over the Ducks would allow the Beavers to forget their nightmarish season they have gone through so far. It would give them a fresh start on next year, and allow departing head coach Craig Fertig a touch of dignity after his abrupt firing at mid-season and the ensuing fervor.

Oregon head coach Rich Brooks has never lost to Oregon State in his two years at the Ducks' helm. But this year, Brooks is worried about taking on the Beavers. What has him upset is the rash of serious injuries that have crippled much of the Ducks' starting defensive line and some key players on the offensive squad.

"If we had all our people, we would be superior physically to Oregon State. But now, I would say we are fairly equal," Brooks says.

Oregon will be without three of its four starters on the defensive line — tackles Vince Goldsmith (out with a broken leg suffered against UCLA) and Scott Setterlund (who has been plagued by knee problems most of the season) and end Neil Eishire, who underwent knee surgery following a season-ending injury in practice last week.

"Without them, we aren't as fast or big," claims Brooks, who will also be forced to play with a number of Ducks who are hobbled with injuries.

Defensive tackle Mike Kesler hyperextended his elbow against the Bruins but will start on defense. Defensive end Gordon Bledsoe is still feeling the effects of a hip pointer that allowed him to play only one series of downs at a time against UCLA, and starting tailback Dwight Robertson is sidelined for the remainder of the season with a broken wrist.

"This is the worst problem we have had since I've been here," Brooks says in reference to his injury list.

Brooks isn't just worried about the injuries that have knocked down some of his key players. He also is worried about Oregon State's offense and its ability to move the ball and score points.

"Oregon State is a team that is really hard to predict. They've played pretty good football in the last three weeks, and I think they have improved as a team since mid-season," Brooks says.

Brooks points to the Beavers production in their last three games as an indication of just how much they have improved. "They've scored 33, 42, and 18 points in their last three games. Compare that to what we have scored in our last three games — 37, 16, and zero points — and you can see that they have gone uphill and we have gone downhill."

Oregon's head coach thinks the Ducks can stop Oregon State if they can contain quarterback Scott Richardson and wide receiver Steve Coury, the nation's leading receiver and Oregon State's all-time leading receiver.

"Given time, Richardson is excellent," analyzes Brooks, "and Coury is a good receiver because he gets into the open and finds a way to get the ball. It will be difficult to stop both."

Brooks plans on throwing a nickel defense — five defensive backs — at the Beavers and Richardson. But he feels the Ducks must stop Oregon State's rushing game to effectively corral Richardson.

"The first thing we have to do is stop their running game. That won't be easy given our defensive line situation," Brooks explains.

The key to winning this year's Civil War game could be decided by who puts the most points on the scoreboard. Saturday's game could resemble the shoot-out Oregon and Washington State staged in Pullman earlier this season, when the Ducks outscored the Cougars 37-26.

"The way they've (Oregon State) been playing on offense and with our situation on defense, our offense will have to score some points," says Brooks.

Oregon will probably do what it has done well all year — run the ball — according to Brooks. "In games we have done well in, we have established our running game and thrown off of it."

But as Brooks will tell you, Civil War games aren't conducive to logic or reason. Establishing any consistency in a Civil War game is almost impossible.

One thing is easy to establish at Civil War games, though — who rules the state for a year.

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