

Baseball cut irks former coach

By STEVE SPATZ
Of the Emerald

Last spring, four Oregon sports were cut from the budget, leaving coaches, players and fans surprised and disappointed.

The Emerald Sports department continues with its fourth installment in the five-part series, "Feeling the Cuts", by looking at what happened to the Oregon baseball team.

May 13, 1981, and the place is Oregon's Howe Field. With two outs in the bottom of the ninth, and Washington leading 5-1 over Oregon, Duck batter Kyle Keaton made contact with a curve ball and sent a grounder skimming lightly over the freshly cut grass.

Routine play. The Husky third baseman scooped up the ball and made the long throw to first for the last out. End of inning, end of game.

And the end of baseball at Oregon.

Of all the cuts announced on May 7 last year, the decision to dump baseball was perhaps the most difficult.

Since 1908, baseball has been a part of the Oregon athletic program.

Through the years, Oregon teams have won 17 league championships, finished as high as seventh in the NCAA tournaments, and placed numerous players into pro baseball, including Dave Roberts and Donnie Reynolds.

But then again, there was little doubt at the time that cuts were being mullied, that baseball was going to be one of the victims.

"I wasn't overly surprised," says Mel Krause, baseball coach from 1971 to the end, and now the head of Portland Community College's physical education department.

"Baseball was in jeopardy for the last six years. I wouldn't have been surprised if it would have happened then."

One of the rationales given for the cut was the program's direction in the past five years — downhill. The last winning season for baseball was in 1976, when the Ducks went 20-18. The last time they won a conference title was way back in 1974.

Poor weather

Another reason was the Pacific Northwest climate — more suited for outdoor water polo than the national pastime. Outdoor practice couldn't begin until March, just days before the season started.

The most telling reason may have been the lack of support within the athletic department. Krause's budget had gradually shrunk over the years, and he indicates that office politics may have been the final straw.

"The signs were evident then that people in the

Krause rips officials on commitment to sport



Photo by David Corey

athletic department would like to get rid of the sport," says Krause. "But I really don't want to get into that now."

Lack of success, lack of support, and lack of sunshine — three strikes and Oregon baseball was out.

"We didn't really believe it was happening," says Rick Moonitz, an infielder on the last team, and still enrolled in the University.

"I mean this is baseball, the national pastime. How could they cut it? We were all just kind of laughing, like it couldn't be true."

"But then, a lot of us figured that if the ax was going to fall, it would be on baseball."

"We never really took it seriously," says Steve Crum, the Ducks' best hitter, now playing at Portland State University. "I didn't think they'd ever completely cut it out, and I didn't realize they were serious until this summer."

As is the case with every coach of a sport that the University eliminated, Krause believes the decision to cut out his sport was a mistake.

Popular sport

"Baseball is very popular in Oregon high schools," he says, "And the main responsibility for the University is to offer programs for the high school students in the state of Oregon."

"If the administrators are really serious, then they'll establish priorities that try to meet that criteria."

While Krause has moved on to bigger and better things, most of his former players have not. Crum, and pitchers Bill Gwinn, Dan King, Dean Hummell, and Eric Austad all ended up at Portland State. James Nutt transferred to the University of California at Davis, while Eric Martinez is at Pan American University in Texas.

But the rest, including Moonitz, pitcher Jim Givens, infielders Bob Krueger, Keaton, Mike McLaran, Stuart Heath, and outfielder Russ Batzer and Dan Alderman are still in Eugene.

"It was terrible that they were left holding the bag," says Krause. "Here are 12 to 15 kids capable of playing Pac-10 ball. It comes down to whether or not they want to transfer, and give up everything they had here, to play baseball, or stay here and not play."

"It is admirable that they (the athletic department) are continuing to give (the players) the same grant-in-aids they had last year."

Blasts administration

But Krause would say few things are admirable about the Oregon athletic administration's view of baseball. He leveled some blasts at the former and present athletic department administrations as to their stated commitments to baseball.

"When I saw how the football team used to fly the women's athletic director (formerly Julie Carson) to the away football games, just to show that they have a women's athletic director, just to show her off, well that tells you something about how committed they were to baseball. Let's see, a plane ticket costs about \$200 a shot? That's \$200 that could have gone to saving baseball."

"Now, when I see the football team holding practices (at Howe Field), making a mess of that field after we spent hours to improve it, that also tells you something about how committed they are now to bring baseball back."

Rick Bay, Oregon's new athletic director, has stated that his second priority after balancing the budget is to bring back all of the sports cut last spring. But a drive led by Bill Triplett, a Portland businessman, is well under way to solicit enough private donations to bring baseball back — as soon as this spring.

Save baseball

The Save Oregon Baseball fund must meet a Nov. 1 deadline of \$150,000 pledged in order for the sport to return this spring. As of last week, they were still more than \$50,000 short of the goal. (This topic will be discussed at length in tomorrow's installment of "Feeling the Cuts.")

If, by a slim chance, the money comes in, the Ducks can field a team. They wouldn't have a coach, but they do have the players. "We're covered at every position, except for pitching," says Moonitz. "I know the guys still here would turn out."

But if that chance to play doesn't come to be for the players still here, it won't really matter to Moonitz.

"It was something to do in the afternoons," he says, "Now I'll play golf."

"It had to end sometime."

Ah, yesssss.....

The
LATE
GREAT
SPAGETTI FEED IS BACK!



All the bread, all the salad & all the spaghetti with any sauce you can eat (meatballs not included). Includes a pitcher of beer or a half liter of wine!

Tuesdays and Thursdays \$4.95
after 8:00 p.m.

725 West First
Eugene
485-1919

the
spaghetti
warehouse
OPEN EVERY DAY 5 P.M.

University Mobil Service Center

Winterization Special
Radiator Flush and Oil Change

Thermostat and Gasket	\$7.00
Antifreeze	\$12.50
Flush Chem.	\$4.00
Radiator Cap	\$4.90
New Oil (5 quarts)	\$8.75
Oil Filter	\$6.45
Lube	\$6.00
Labor Flush and Install thermostat	\$15.00

Total Cost \$64.60
Savings with Coupon \$15.00

Discount Price v-8 \$49.60

Total Cost for 4 and 6 cyl.
Savings with coupon \$12.00

Discount Price \$46.50

University Mobil

1535 Franklin Blvd.

484-6822

Offer expires Nov. 30, 1981

Parka
Sale



Light weight yet rugged parka.

Waterproof with a breathable liner!

Men's & Women's sizes reg. \$80.00

NOW \$49.95

New shipment 2nds in Polypropylene underwear reg \$16.00
NOW \$8.00

SECONDS WEST

on the corner of 7th and Filmore
1 block East of Chambers
Eugene's Discount Outfitter