

Will they return?

Baseball has best shot at being resurrected

By STEVE SPATZ
Of the Emerald

More than five months have passed since the University announced its decision to eliminate four intercollegiate sports. Of those sports, three have disappeared completely, while women's soccer has hung on at the club sport level.

The Emerald Sports series, "Feeling the Cuts," has examined each sport in detail, telling of the surprise, shock and outrage when the cuts were announced, and the frustration and sadness when they were carried out.

Today's final segment will tell of the future of each sport on the Oregon campus.

This year, there will be no Oregon women swinging golf clubs, or any men gyrating on gymnastic apparatus for the Ducks.

Nor will there likely be an Oregon baseball team swatting fast balls at Howe Field.

Once just a bad dream, the cuts made last May are now reality. The surprise and shock of the athletes and coaches chopped from the athletic department have now turned to either bitterness or resignation. Now they're feeling the cuts.

Immediately following the announcement May 7 by the University administration, there was talk of reviving some of the sports, either by alternative plans for cuts in the athletic budget, or by private sponsors willing to pump the needed funding in.

But as time has gone by, that talk has quieted down.



Graphic by Max DeRungs

Oregon athletic director Rick Bay has gone on the record very early in his administration concerning the four sports eliminated in last spring's cut.

"As I have stated before, one of the priorities down the road, once we have established a balanced budget, is to restore those sports that were cut," said Bay.

Bay, hired last summer to succeed former director John Caine, was not at Oregon when the decisions were made to cut, yet he trusts the judgement of those who made the final choice.

"I know that during the discussions that there was a lot of soul searching. A lot of people might feel that they were treated unfairly, but that's just human nature."

"I know the people charged with the responsibility were as fair as they could be."

The key to when Bay can bring back the sports eliminated depends upon one thing — money.

"When we gain a certain amount of revenue that we have lost, then we can do this," said Bay. "I can give no timetable on when this will happen — but this is a goal. I can't tell you how long this will take."

From most observers' standpoints, each of the sports — women's golf and soccer, and men's baseball and gymnastics — have varied chances of returning to the University in the near future.

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Women's soccer, the most expensive program cut, may have the shortest time in limbo. Relatively few knew the sport even existed last year, its first year, and fewer still were benefited by the \$15,243 program.

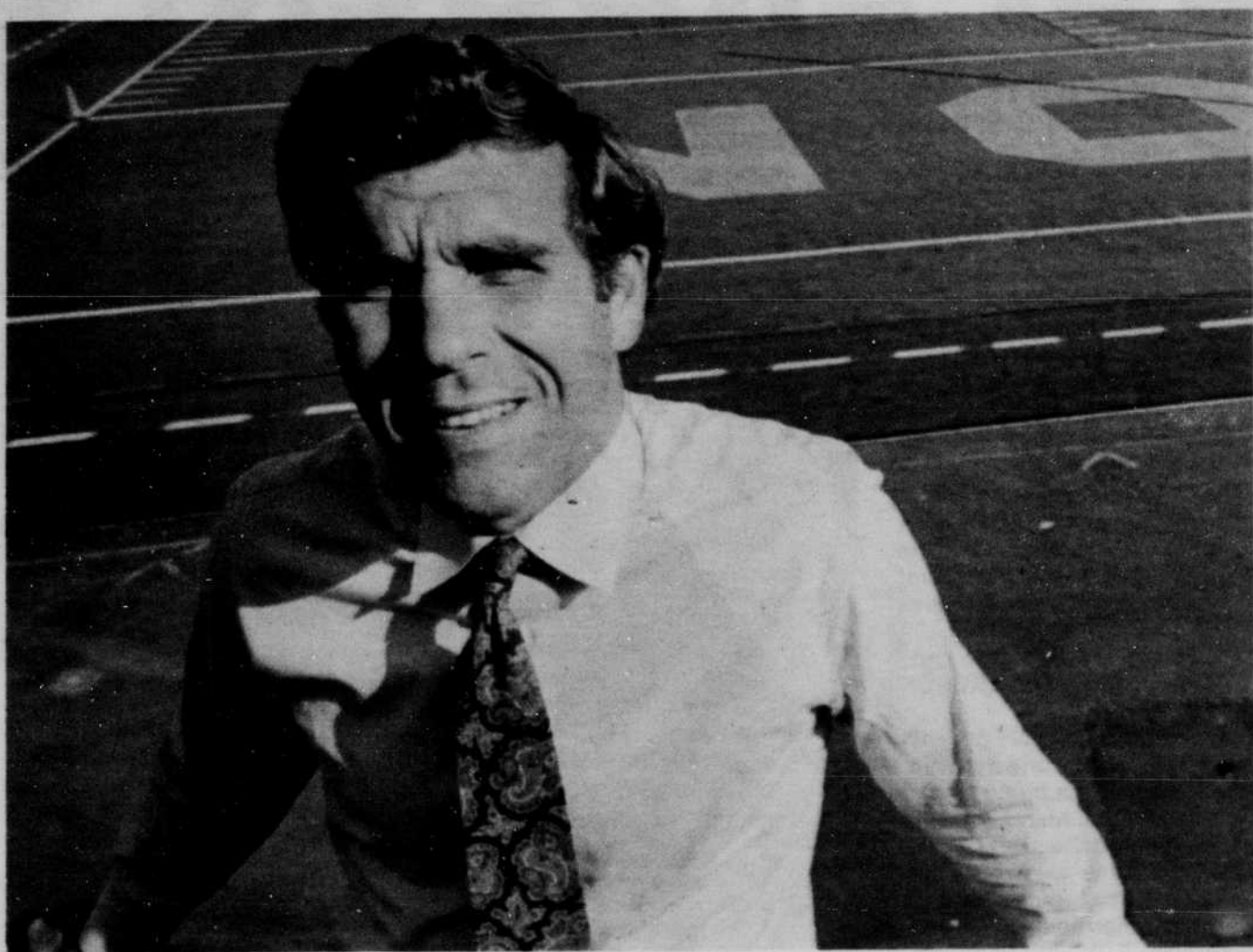


Photo by Mark Pynes

Athletic director Rick Bay is committed to bringing the sports back to the campus. "One of the priorities, down the road, is to restore the sports that were cut."

Successful with or without varsity sport funding, women's soccer may have a much shorter wait for reinstatement. Relatively inexpensive — \$19,406 — the team could well make the national playoffs this year, barring a disastrous streak of luck. The sport would be an attractive addition to the women's program.

If Bill Ballester had his way, men's gymnastics might never be back. "It would be a great injustice to tear it down and then try to build it back up again," said Ballester, the coach of Oregon's winningest sport in history.

"It would take a long time (to build it back up). When the University cut the sports it was unprecedented for a university to cut a nationally ranked program."

"Now don't get me wrong; I love the University, and I'm proud of the athletic department, but it doesn't change the fact that they screwed up."

Still Ballester believes that gymnastics may one day be resurrected. It would take at least five years for effective recruiting and an additional five years to get back on the championship level.

"But the credibility is gone," added Ballester, who said he'll never be involved in gymnastics at the University again.

The one sport with a good shot at returning this year is baseball — ironically the least successful of the sports cut.

As soon as the decision to eliminate baseball was announced, a group of interested citizens began formulating a way to bring the national pastime back to the campus. Bill Triplett, a Portland businessman and former college baseball player, organized the Save Oregon Baseball Committee last spring to finance the return of baseball.

Triplett and committee chairman John Elorriaga, chairman of the board of U.S. Bancorp, talked with University officials about their goal.

"I went down to Eugene to investigate the possibilities," said Triplett, a graduate of Stanford. "I talked with Ray Hawk (vice-president for administration and finance) and Curt Simic (vice president for public affairs), and they told me that the only way that baseball would be reinstated was if the funds needed

were developed from outside the University."

Two plans were considered. One plan involved a \$500,000 endowment fund that, at 15% interest, would yield \$75,000 per year — more than enough to fund a team.

The other was a short-term measure — a stake of \$150,000 to fund the team for three years. This was the plan decided upon by the committee.

With 10 or so players from last year's team still in Eugene, the committee thought fielding a team as soon as 1982 was feasible. But for the team to be able to play the 1982 season, a deadline of Nov. 1 was set by the Northern Division baseball conference for Oregon to be included in this year's schedule.

And as the deadline approaches, the Save Oregon Baseball fund is still a long way from success. \$50,000 has been raised thus far, but \$100,000 must still come in within two weeks.

And to compound the problem, Triplett has told those who have donated thus far that the money is for bringing baseball back this year — and that the money will be returned if the deadline isn't met.

"It's been tough," Triplett said. "It's a tough economy now, the lumber industry is in horrible shape. People who would normally give can't come up with the money."

The money that's come in so far has been mostly in large chunks — Elorriaga's U.S. Bank chipped in \$15,000, while Pacific Northwest Bell added \$10,000 to name a few. But Triplett's plan for the final push is a personal appeal. "I sent 500 letters out last week, asking people to give \$150 for three years. If we get 200 people willing to do that, we'll make our goal."

Whether or not baseball will make it back is still up in the air. "I've been in contact with people who conceivably would be willing to give \$40,000 or \$50,000. It could be just a couple of phone calls away."

Or it could be a lot longer time before baseball and the other three Oregon sports return to the campus. A plea from a member of the women's soccer team probably best sums up the feelings of those athletes now truly feeling the cuts:

"Tell them we want to be varsity again."

One more acronym; true-false

In Thursday's Emerald, Steve Spatz's column "Acronyms in uniform" should have included one more pair of opposites — true-false.

It is true that Micheal Leander was enrolled at USC from the fall of 1970 to spring of 1972. However, it is also true that O.J. Simpson graduated from USC in 1969, the year before Leander even arrived at the school, and was a member of the NFL's Buffalo Bills in the fall of that year.

Leander's claims to have tried out for the same team or to have been in a class with Simpson are false.

The Emerald Sports staff regrets the error and pledges to do its utmost to insure against another error of this kind.

Yankees sweep Oakland for pennant

OAKLAND (AP) — Willie Randolph snapped a scoreless tie with a two-out homer in the sixth inning and the New York Yankees captured their 33rd American League pennant by beating the Oakland A's 4-0 Thursday night to complete a three-game sweep of the league championship series.

Graig Nettles, who already had driven in six runs in the first two games of the series, ripped a two-out three-run double over the head of centerfielder Rick Bosetti in the ninth inning to put an end to the 1981 story of the upstart A's.

Dave Righetti, the Yankees 22-year-old rookie left-hander, held Oakland scoreless through six

innings, but after throwing 112 pitches, he was replaced by Ron Davis and then Goose Gossage who finished up for the World Series-bound Yankees. In all, they held the A's to five hits.

Former Yankee manager and player Billy Martin's A's could score only four runs in three games against New York while the Yankees scored 20.

New York stranded nine runners through the first five innings, which took two hours to play. Finally, Randolph ended the tension by picking on a 1-0 delivery by Matt Keough that he lofted high over the left field wall for his first home run since April and his first in postseason play since 1977.