

# Looking for a few good men

Today the Duck recruiters find out how they fared

By Steve Turcotte  
Of the Emerald

It's that *time* of the year that makes coaches feel like O.J. Simpson flying through airports; the *time* of year that coaches sit and cross their fingers in anticipation of obtaining the players they desire.

That *time* of the year is football recruiting.

And today — February 10 — is the day that Oregon coaches open the letters of intent, and find out how well they've sold their program.

"I'm exhausted right now," Oregon assistant football coach Neal Zoumboukos said, slumping in his chair. "I've been traveling a lot — mostly between Eugene and the Bay Area."

He hasn't been the only Duck coach traveling extensively. According to Zoumboukos, all the Oregon coaches are delegated an area in which to recruit.

"Every coach is given a specific geographic area," Zoumboukos said. "One area is Washington and Idaho, another is the San Joaquin Valley to part of the Bay Area. I have the Bay Area and points east."

As the Oregon coaches sit and ponder who will sign with them today, the process for next year's recruiting has already begun.

"The recruiting has already started for next year by our mailing information to the high schools and junior colleges," Zoumboukos said. "Coaches respond to us, but other coaches do not respond. If they don't get in touch with us, we get in touch with them."

This is when the process really gets into full swing.

"In the latter part of our football season, our coaches will fly out on Thursday and see high school games in their region on Friday and then get back in time for our game on Saturday," explained Zoumboukos.

After the football season, the process becomes a bit more difficult. The coaches have to begin chopping names off their list of 300.

"In December, you take the list of 300 and get it down to 65-70 players who you want to visit your school," Zoumboukos said. "They are all competing for 25 scholarships. That's all we can give."

Recruiting is both frustrating and pleasing for the college coaches. Pleasing in the sense that if you are a USC, rich in football tradition, you don't have to worry about obtaining top players. But a school like Oregon, not so rich in football tradition, and spending a year on probation, is not as successful in recruiting top prep players.

## Duck coach Rich Brooks is in Sacramento making a last pitch for Willhite

"Recruiting is frustrating on two accounts," Zoumboukos said. "First, when you can't get a player you want and second when you have good players you want and you don't have enough scholarships to get them."

A good case in point about frustration in recruiting for Oregon was the Kevin Willhite saga.

Willhite, from Sacramento, California, considered one of the top players in the country, narrowed his college list to Oregon, Washington and UCLA. He had said that he wanted to play football at a college where there was a good track program. So the Oregon coaches crossed their fingers when they heard that, because Bill Dellinger has one of the top track programs in the nation at Oregon.

But last week, Willhite, after a visit to Washington, said that he wanted to become a Husky.

"Everyone you bring for a visit you hope you make an impression," Zoumboukos said. "With someone like Kevin, you try a little harder, but there are limitations on what you can do."

The Ducks are definitely trying harder still for Willhite. Head coach Rich Brooks was in Sacramento Tuesday, making one last appeal.

Brooks and the Ducks are hoping that Willhite will do something that a few players always do: After making a verbal commitment, they change their mind to go to school elsewhere.

"A player named Elton Veals, a junior college transfer, has changed his mind three times," chuckled Zoumboukos. "First he committed to Southern Cal, then to California and then to Illinois."

"You really never know until Feb. 10 at 8:00 a.m.," Zoumboukos says recruiting is crucial to a football program's well-being — even if the school is a Slippery Rock or a USC.

"You can't have a football program without recruiting," Zoumboukos said. "Even the band has to recruit to a certain degree."

And by the end of the day today, the Ducks hope they have done it the right way — enough to fill their roster with quality recruits.



## The lineup so far

Oregon has secured verbal commitments from a few top athletes before the Feb. 10 deadline. Here's the list so far:

### Quarterbacks:

Stephan Jones, 6-0, 195, J.C. transfer from College of the Siskiyous. First team all-state in Division II.

Todd Anderson from Lakeridge High School in Lake Oswego. Anderson, 6-2, 180-pounds, passed for over three miles and 72 touchdowns in three years.

Dana Hill, a 5-10, 180-pounder from Pomona, Calif., had over 4000 total offensive yards as a junior and senior. Hill is also a legitimate candidate for the track team having run the 100 in 9.7 and long jumping 23-9.

### Lineman:

Ray Wheatly, 6-6, 265 offensive tackle from College of the Siskiyous. Steve Jenson, 6-5, 245, offensive guard from Mt. San Antonio J.C. Ed Stringer, 6-6, 260 offensive tackle from Orange Coast J.C. Dave Maley, an offensive lineman from Crook County High School is 6-3, 245. Brian Heater, another offensive lineman from South Salem High, is 6-5, 240. Other linemen to verbally commit are Joe Mansfield (6-5, 210), Tom Harpham (6-4, 210) and Bob Starr (6-3, 215).

### Punter:

Kevin Hicks, transfer from Santa Barbara J.C.

### Kicker:

Tim Wise, 6-0, 180, from Danville, Calif., kicked 28-of-32 PATs in high school and 12-of-15 field goals — including a 59-yarder. He also punted for a 41-yard average.

### Tight End

Rich Gaiser from Oregon City. He an all-stater who runs the 40 in 4.8.

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