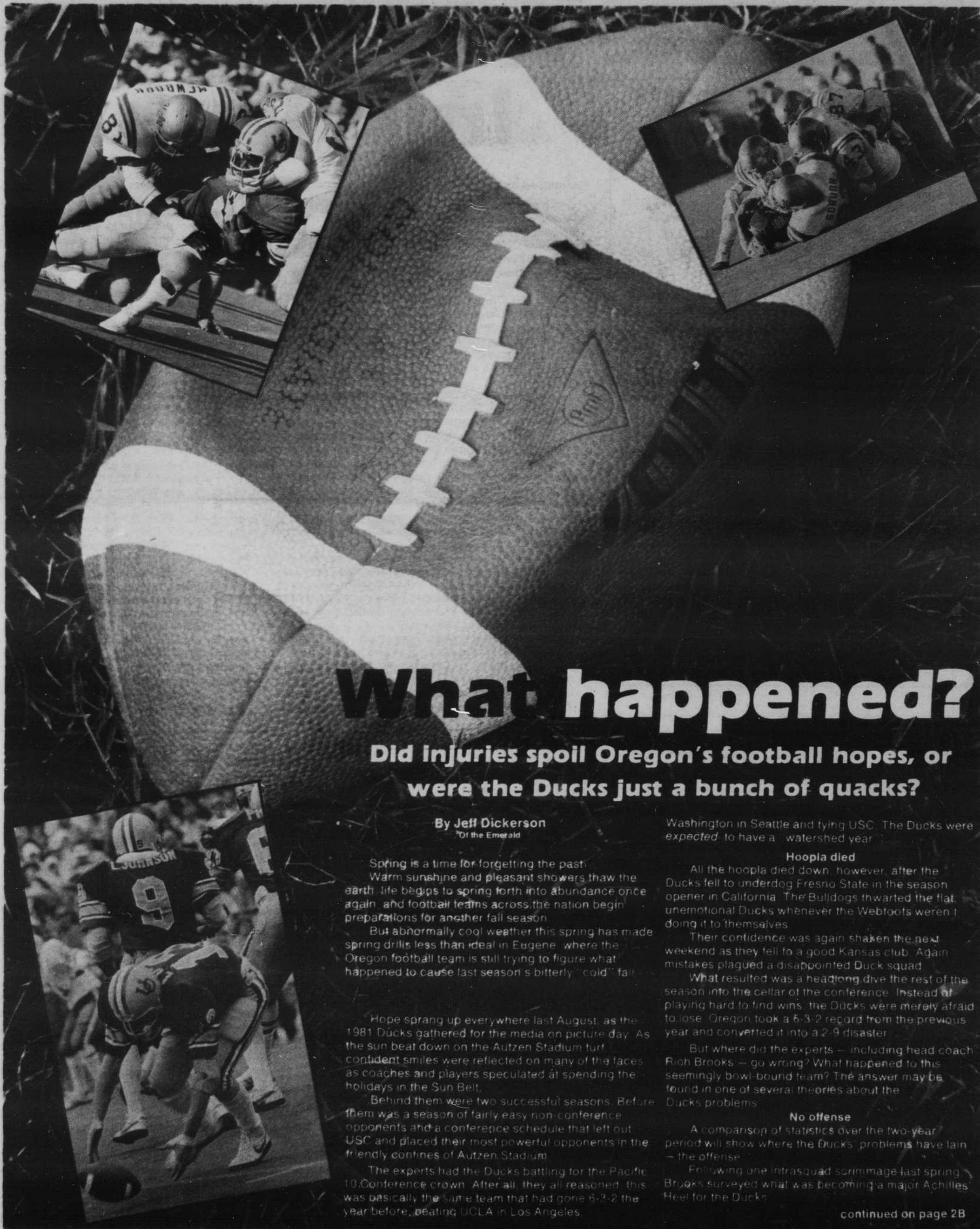


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What happened?

Did injuries spoil Oregon's football hopes, or were the Ducks just a bunch of quacks?

By Jeff Dickerson
Of the Emerald

Spring is a time for forgetting the past. Warm sunshine and pleasant showers thaw the earth, life begins to spring forth into abundance once again, and football teams across the nation begin preparations for another fall season.

But abnormally cool weather this spring has made spring drills less than ideal in Eugene, where the Oregon football team is still trying to figure out what happened to cause last season's bitterly "cold" fall.

Hope sprang up everywhere last August, as the 1981 Ducks gathered for the media on picture day. As the sun beat down on the Autzen Stadium turf, confident smiles were reflected on many of the faces, as coaches and players speculated at spending the holidays in the Sun Belt.

Behind them were two successful seasons. Before them was a season of fairly easy non-conference opponents and a conference schedule that left out USC and placed their most powerful opponents in the friendly confines of Autzen Stadium.

The experts had the Ducks battling for the Pacific 10 Conference crown. After all, they all reasoned, this was basically the same team that had gone 6-3-2 the year before, beating UCLA in Los Angeles,

Washington in Seattle and tying USC. The Ducks were expected to have a watershed year.

Hoopla died

All the hoopla died down, however, after the Ducks fell to underdog Fresno State in the season opener in California. The Bulldogs thwarted the flat, unemotional Ducks whenever the Webfoots weren't doing it to themselves.

Their confidence was again shaken the next weekend as they fell to a good Kansas club. Again mistakes plagued a disappointed Duck squad.

What resulted was a headlong dive the rest of the season into the cellar of the conference. Instead of playing hard to find wins, the Ducks were merely afraid to lose. Oregon took a 6-3-2 record from the previous year and converted it into a 2-9 disaster.

But where did the experts — including head coach Rich Brooks — go wrong? What happened to this seemingly bowl-bound team? The answer may be found in one of several theories about the Ducks' problems.

No offense

A comparison of statistics over the two-year period will show where the Ducks' problems have lain — the offense.

Following one intrasquad scrimmage last spring, Brooks surveyed what was becoming a major Achilles' Heel for the Ducks.

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