

Flying

Continued from Cover

and the state has been humming with talk of the latest in the continuing saga of the quack attack.

"I've talked to people around the community about the image (of University athletics) and they said they can feel it within the community that everyone is so much more positive this year," draws Baker, a transplanted Virginian, who was director of athletic promotions at William and Mary College in Williamsburg, Va., for seven years before moving to Eugene in January.

"And I think the Quack Attack commercials have had a lot to do with that because all of a sudden people are talking about the commercials and not talking about winning or losing."

And there lies the heart of the new look of Oregon athletic promotions.

Rather than promising people "great, grunting victories," says Byrne, the new approach stresses "the fun, the pageantry of college football."

Why? Because, Byrne says, you can't guarantee you're going to win all the time, or even some of the time.

"The dynasties in sports seem to be disappearing," he says. "There aren't any more UCLA's in basketball, or New York Yankees in baseball. There is a lot more parity now."

That is why Rick Bay hired Bill Byrne away from San Diego State, where Byrne was the assistant athletic director of external affairs. Bay wants to insure that Oregon is given every chance it can get to be successful in the world of intercollegiate athletics.

Baker recalls a conversation earlier this year, while he and Byrne were canvassing the state.

"We were riding down the road, and Bill said 'Things that are wrong here can be corrected with money. At a lot of schools, no matter what they do they are never going to get it correct,'" recalls Baker.

Byrne remembers that conversation, and feels even more strongly now that he was right. "We have great opportunities here," Byrne says. "If we can just have enough resources to give our coaches a chance to win, we can make great things happen."

Resources is a key word when you talk about Byrne and Baker. Bay says he hired them to increase the athletic department's base of resources, and both men acknowledge that a vast majority of their time is spent hunting for individuals and corporations willing to help expand that base.

"Rick thought it was important to have a new voice in marketing, fundraising and promotions and dealing with the external side of the department" Byrne says. "He told me it was my responsibility to see what we could do to help raise more money and to successfully promote the Ducks."

"There's never been a position in the department quite like mine," Byrne adds.

Byrne arrived in Eugene in November 1982. Baker was hired in January 1983. Both were amazed by what they found.

They found Herb Yamanaka — then an assistant athletic director — handling all of the work that the new five-person department does. And that was when Yamanaka had time to leave his other duties, which included supervising the ticket of-

rice, facilities, and concessions, and managing events.

"Herb was absolutely programmed to wear himself out," says Byrne. Baker agrees. "I don't even see how Herb did it. It all slid to Herb, and he did the best he could to get it done, but he just didn't have the time."

The lack of funding, both men agree, isn't just limited to the athletic department.

Byrne recalls that while he was at San Diego State, he was impressed with the quality of Old Oregon, the University's alumni magazine.

"Yet when I got her and saw that they were operatin on such a shoestring budget, that amazed me."

Bay's decision to create a new department — the price tag is over \$200,000 per year — was based on the idea that to bring in more money required spending more money to lure that money in.

Or, as Byrne puts it, you have to spend money telling your story if you want people to know about the good things you are doing.

"It's like when your dad sits down and talks to you and he says, 'Son, you got to watch out for yourself, because if you don't do good things for yourself, nobody else is going to.'"

To tell Oregon's story, Byrne first went to the people who knew Oregon — the "best marketing minds in the community," says Byrne.

The committee — all from the private sector, including radio, television, and business leaders — held a series of meetings to identify objectives, assess weaknesses and strengths, and figure out what was wrong and right about the way Oregon presented its athletic teams to the public.

From that committee came a plan of action which included identifying markets, segmenting them, and designing ways to approach them.

The process was not unlike what you might find going on at Coca-Cola or Chevrolet, Byrne says.

"Our strategies are very classic," he emphasizes. "We're doing nothing different as far as the way we'd attack selling a product if you were Sears or General Motors or anyone else. It's very classical, but for athletics that is kind of unique."

Baker says its like any other business, where you go to market seminars and listen to what other corporations say and how they market their products.

"A lot of people in athletics think you sort of tee it up on Saturday and go out and play the game," says Baker. "It's a year-round job. It is a business, it really is, and if there is any college around that doesn't treat it that way, I don't know who they are anymore."

But, says Byrne, there is one nagging difference.

"The problem you get in sports marketing versus selling a can of Coke is that Coke is uniform — it tastes the same no matter whether

you buy it in Eugene, Oregon, or Atlanta, Georgia. College athletic programs differ, based on who you graduate the year before and so forth," Byrne says.

"There is not the measure of consistency, so you have to attach yourself to something that is consistent in your marketing approach," he says. "And the consistent element that we decided upon — and there are several — is fun."

Thus, the nest was feathered — all it needed was the proper bird.

That bird showed up in the form of Baden-Amir, a local advertising firm.

They offered that Oregon's past football promotion campaigns had never quite been in tune with what was going on down on the gridiron.

Slogans like "The Wide Open Game," "Returning Excitement," "The Big Mean Green," and "The Rush Is On" seemed more suited for Ohio State than Oregon.

Baden-Amir suggested that Oregon consider a promotion campaign that wouldn't promise anything more than a "great afternoon of good, wholesome family entertainment," recalls Byrne.

Byrne liked the idea, hired the ad firm, and suddenly people were being quack attacked from billboards, radios and televisions.

It is a concept that will be around for more than one football season, promises Byrne.

"I believe in taking a central theme and using spinoffs. You do it for years," Byrne says. "Next year we may have 'Return of Quack Attack' or 'Son of Quack Attack.' We'll do something nuts with it, you can count on it. We'll get people's attention, because that is exactly what we are after."

Although the "Quack Attack" campaign is their centerpiece promotion, Byrne and Baker have devised seemingly endless other ways to lure fans into Autzen Stadium this fall.

Football, both agree, is of prime importance

in their line of work. It receives so much of their attention — along with basketball, and in Oregon's case, track — because of its ability to draw large crowds.

"Football and basketball are your revenue sports," says Byrne. "Till the day comes that we have some other sports that can generate the amount of dollars that football and basketball do, then the pressure will continue to be on those two sports."

So what have the two planned this fall in the way of promotions?

For the Houston game this weekend, fans can get coupons worth \$1 off the price of a general admission ticket at area McDonald's. There will be 10,000 free football posters, courtesy of William's Bread. A dixieland or bluegrass band — or both — will offer tailgate-parties a musical treat before the game in the parking lot. There will be a duck-calling contest, and a chili cook-off.

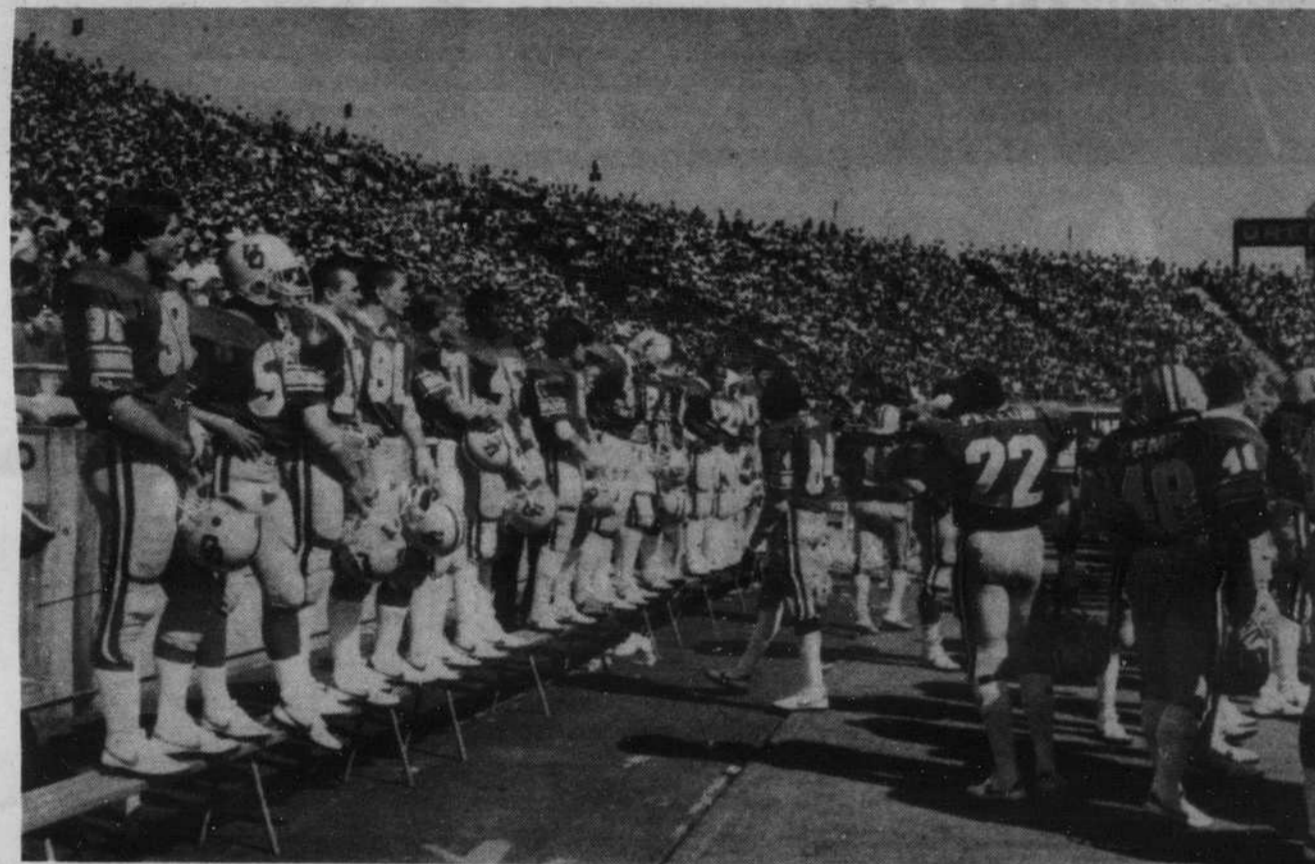
The idea is to provide an entertaining afternoon, says Baker, and hopefully begin a trend among Oregon fans this year.

"Football, because it is the first sport in the fall, has the ability to get everybody pumped up for the rest of the year," Baker says. "And if football's had a good year then everybody is all excited about basketball. I just set a tone among your student body and amongst the alumni."

But what the fans at Autzen Stadium see Saturday will only be the tip of the iceberg of work Byrne and Baker wade through, for much of their time is spent out of the spotlight with alumni, soliciting donations.

"Our budget is made up of private donations, gate receipts, a small student fee and television money," Byrne says. "There's nothing we can do about the first two, but we've had a definite impact on the fund-raising end of it."

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Oregon's season opener against Pacific drew 3,000 more fans to Autzen Stadium than last fall's first home game.

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