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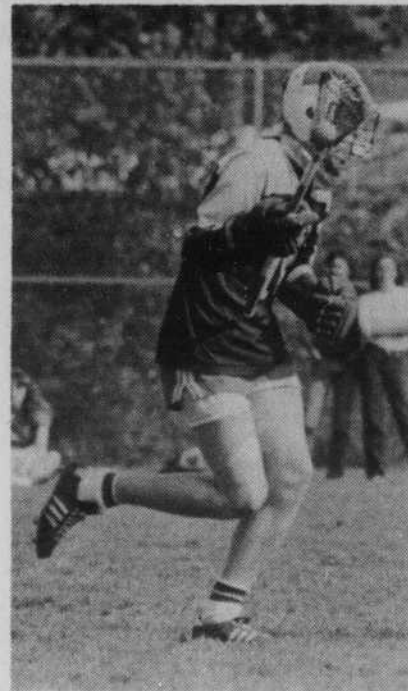
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Oregon's men's lacrosse team is busily carving itself a niche



Emerald File Photo

By KEVIN LANDSKRONER

Nestled away in a patch of grass behind Hayward Field lies the practice field of the Oregon men's lacrosse team.

In many ways, that rather isolated field epitomizes the relative obscurity that the men's lacrosse team dwells in compared with the football, basketball, and track teams at Oregon.

But men's lacrosse is beginning to make its own mark at Oregon.

Last month, the Ducks packed their sticks and helmets and road tripped to Portland, site of the Pacific Northwest Lacrosse Association Tournament.

And by the time the tournament ended, the Ducks had

taken the B bracket championship.

"At first I didn't think we could win it all but I knew we could hang with most of the teams," recalls Oregon freshman Chris Kotchik. "We had beaten Western Washington before (the team the Ducks faced in the championship game) and when we faced them in the championship we had the edge."

The Ducks downed the University of Washington 9-5 in their opening game, then disposed of Whitworth College of Spokane 7-2, before knocking off Western Washington 6-5 for the B bracket title.

"We were heavy underdogs coming into the tournament and a lot of teams were surprised to still see us in it," says Dan Jensen, a senior defenseman who also doubles as the team's administrative and financial manager.

So what makes a quality lacrosse player, which Oregon seems to be cultivating quite successfully?

"A lot of it is mental," says Jensen. "There are a lot of guys who think they're great athletes and try to come out and play but can't use the stick. Lacrosse is a game of fundamentals and technique and if you don't have it you might as well start playing chess because you won't survive on the lacrosse field."

Jensen points to Kotchik, Jim Stallman, Pete Fields and goalie K.C. Hyatt as the key players on the team.

"K.C. was a big surprise," Jensen says. "He transferred from Ohio-Wesleyan just at the time when we were looking for a goalie because the guy we had at goalie was not our regular guy. K.C. came by and asked if we needed a player and ever since he's been awesome."

Jensen calls Kotchik "a natural" on the field and also points to Stallman, Fields, Scott Piel, and Scrafford Orsor as the backbone of the offense. "When we need goals, those guys always produce," says Jensen.

If there was is word to sum up Oregon's lacrosse team, according to Jensen, it's "tight." "We're like a machine. We all work hard on the field and party hard afterwards," says Jensen. "The closeness on the team has helped us a lot this season because I can count on the guys showing up for practice and playing tough during the game."

Lacrosse is in many ways radically different from traditional collegiate sports like football or basketball.

"It's a gentleman's sport," says Jensen. "After the game, instead of kicking the opposing team off our field, we end up slamming brews with them and partying with them — which is pretty unusual for a varsity sport."

Another contrast is the attire. Unlike football, where the players are adorned in neck and knee braces, padded pants and air pressured helmets, the lacrosse code of ethics is simple.

"We don't get into equipment," says Jensen. The only



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