

Commentary

Years of frustration put to rest

In some communities, football means more than just keeping track of who has season tickets.

In some communities, foot-

Commentary by
Steve Maher

ball can lead to something more.

In Eugene, the success of the 1987 Oregon Duck football team has allowed years of frustration to finally come unglued; frustration brought about by a football record of 40-66-4 since 1977 and a sour economy.

And come unglued it has.

This probably was never more apparent than after the victories over Washington and USC the last couple of weeks. Seldom have events brought such raucous celebrations to Eugene as the two upsets provided.

"The Ducks are for real," people shouted in streets and bars, as strangers hugged strangers and drank to the stars. No one doubted it was a long time in coming.

But think back for a moment, if you will, to the dark days of gloom and despair. After decent and optimistic years of 6-5 in 1979 and 6-3-2 in 1980, the Oregon football program ran head first into "irregularities" and hit rock bottom, finishing with 2-9 and 2-8-1 records in 1981 and 1982.

Included were back-to-back home losses to San Jose State and Fresno State in 1982, a season that saw Oregon open 0-8-1. But the team's first win, an upset over Arizona, brought out something else: the long suffering, loyal Duck fan. Maintaining themselves through an afternoon of intermittent rain showers, the 20,000-plus fans in attendance cheered as if they were crowning a champion when the final seconds ticked off.

Although the following seasons produced a certain level of mediocrity (4-6-1 in 1983, 6-5 in 1984, 5-6 in 1985, and 5-6 in 1986), the low points remained. In 1983, with the Ducks starting out 2-0 in Pac-10 play, Washington came calling. Perhaps the fans expected too much. The Huskies certainly didn't, spitting out the Ducks 32-3 and supplying a parking lot full of mocking fans.

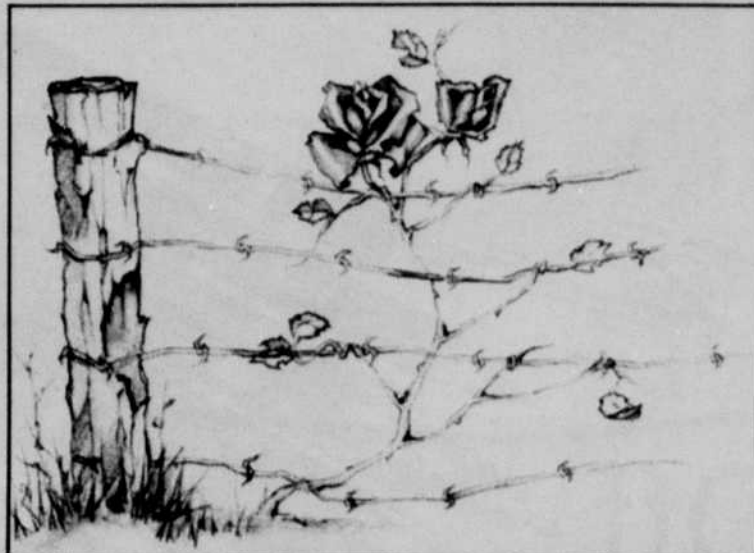
In 1985, again against Washington, a Duck wide-receiver failed to turn around when a long pass sailed his way, sealing a 19-13 loss in the closing seconds.

winners, and roses are beginning to grow around the rusty barb wire. Old man gloom has put away his face.

The frustration of being down for so long could be seen and heard when passing by the alumni tent following the USC game. Amid the cups of hoisted beer, a chant began until it practically brought down the green and white structure: "Rose Bowl, Rose Bowl, Rose Bowl."

An hour or so after the game I ran into a woman celebrating like most Oregon fans do, with a drink in hand.

During the game, she had visited her father a couple of



Graphic by Lorraine Rath

The local economy during the Duck slide didn't fare much better. Back when the national recession and the decline of the lumber industry hit Lane County like a couple of linebackers on the loose, the business atmosphere was bleak.

It was a common sight five, six, seven years ago to see store fronts boarded up gathering dust and cob webs. In the face of such conditions, the less-determined souls moved away. Others remained, however.

Eugene, Ore., was down for the count and not moving.

But now a resurrection of sorts has occurred. The economy is better, the Ducks are

times as he sat in the "shady" side of Autzen. On her last visit, as the wave made a triple assault around the stadium and the electricity of the crowd reverberated from section to section, the woman turned to her father and said, "after all these years, can you believe this?"

Her father's response was simple and to-the-point: "It sure helps to win."

So go ahead and call them the Fighting Ducks of Oregon, if you will. Or call them the Mighty Fighting Ducks of Oregon, if you must.

But don't forget to call them winners. At last.

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



Rusty makes his move.

ADVERTISE RIGHT NEXT TO The FAR SIDE, DAILY!

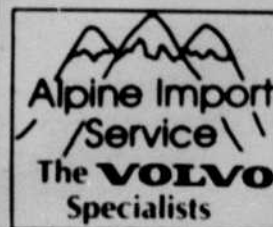
38,750 Readers will see
your business!

Call 686-3712

For Details

VOLVO Owners

Preventive Maintenance Special



FREE
SAFETY INSPECTION
\$10⁵⁰ OIL CHANGE

4 cyl. includes oil
& filter

Located at 12th & Main in Springfield

Call 726-1808 for appointment

ALL WORK GUARANTEED

-UO-Bookstore-

Video Rentals

SUPERMOVIES

Movie Rentals
\$1.00 Mon.-Wed. (\$2.00 for New Releases)
\$1.50 Thurs.-Sat. (\$2.00 for New Releases)

VCR Rentals

\$4.95 Mon.-Thurs. With 1 FREE Movie
\$6.95 Fri. & Sat. With 1 FREE Movie
\$9.95 Fri. to Mon. With 2 FREE Movies

VHS

New location **EMU COMPUTER SHOPPE**

UO BOOKSTORE 686-4331 ext. 54 or 55
Downstairs EMU
M-F 9:00-7:00
SAT 10:00-5:00