

UK denies outbidding

PORTLAND (AP) — University of Oregon Athletic Director Bill Byrne says he's stunned that Independence Bowl officials deny a bidding battle led to Oregon's first bowl invitation in 26 years.

Byrne said he outbid the University of Kentucky by agreeing to buy 14,000 spectator tickets at \$25 apiece for a total of \$350,000 to get Oregon an invitation to play Tulsa in the Dec. 16 bowl at Shreveport, La.

Bowl officials and Kentucky Athletic Director C.M. Newton denied Byrne's story Wednesday.

"From the very beginning, I made it clear that the University of Kentucky would not buy itself into a bowl game... As far as a guaranteed number of tickets that UK would purchase, that was never specified by us," Newton said in a prepared statement released by the Kentucky sports information office.

"That comes a real surprise to me," Byrne told The Oregonian from San Francisco, where he was attending Pacific 10 Conference meetings. "What I said was absolutely accurate."

Byrne said he negotiated for the invitation with Brant Goyne, a Shreveport dentist who is a member of the Independence Bowl Committee.

Kentucky "came in with an offer to buy 12,000 tickets and we had to match."

Byrne said. "Then Kentucky came back with 14,000. I gulped at that, but then I thought you amortize 2,000 tickets over our 26 years of not going to a bowl game, and I'm not going to let 2,000 tickets stand in the way."

The Independence Bowl, which has neither corporate sponsorship nor a lucrative network television contract, has been on shaky financial footing since last year's game between Southern Mississippi and the University of Texas-El Paso. The game drew only 20,242 spectators in the 50,459-seat Independence Stadium.

Goyne said he told Byrne the Independence Bowl has to draw fans willing to spend money to be beneficial to the residents of Shreveport.

John Frazier, Independence Bowl chairman, said it was Byrne's enthusiasm, messages from Oregon boosters and phone calls from Oregon political figures, such as Gov. Neil Goldschmidt and U.S. Sen. Bob Packwood, that persuaded the committee to settle on Oregon.

"We wanted to sell as many tickets as possible, but I'm not going to get in argument with Bill about numbers," Frazier said. "If Bill wants to talk in terms of numbers, that's his business. I'm not going to talk about my negotiations with any team."

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were Prop 48 with me, but they had had more experience in high school.

"We had to adopt to everything at the college level and prove we were Pac-10 material," he said. "Coach Radcliffe really helped out by keeping us in shape and helping us get stronger."

Oldham didn't set the world on fire his sophomore season as a Duck, but did intercept two passes and started four games. However, he has been nothing short of spectacular the last two seasons.

Last season he intercepted five passes to tie for the conference lead and also was the national leader in kickoff returns, averaging 29.4 yards per return; a role Oldham picked up in spring practice prior to his junior season.

"That happened in spring ball," he said. "Our returners from the year before were all gone so I tried it and averaged about 25 yards on four returns. Returning kickoffs is just a matter of focusing in on everything and I think I have adapted pretty well."

After such an outstanding season as a junior, Oldham was a first team all-conference defensive back and was a second team all-Pac-10 return specialist. He was an honorable mention all-American by the *Sporting News* last season and was a pre-season all-American by *Playboy* this year.

It would have been easy for Oldham to fall a notch or two this season with teams throwing away from him, running backs running to the other side, or kickers kicking the ball away

from him.

But rather than play left cornerback as he is listed on the roster, he plays all over the field. He is regularly assigned the opposing team's best receiver and as defensive coordinator Denny Schuler puts it, there are no worries when Oldham is covering someone.

"Man-to-man defense is made to order for Chris," Schuler said. "You can put him on a guy, and in your mind, erase those two from the blackboard. So many times, Chris doesn't need any help."

This season Oldham has done everything that Schuler could ask for and more. He has shut down the top receivers in the Pac-10 all season and come

up with the key interceptions or plays when the Ducks needed them.

Oldham was second in the conference this season with six interceptions and led the Pac-10 in kickoff returns again with a 28.7 yard average.

He was again honored with first team all-conference honors and was also a first team all-conference kick returner.

He has also raked in the all-American honors by being named first team all-American by the Football Writers Associ-

ation of America and has been a second team all-American choice by the Associated Press and *Football News*.

Despite playing for a team that doesn't get the national recognition of a Notre Dame, Michigan, or USC, Oldham feels he still gets the recognition he deserves.

"It's hard for one person to stand out at a school like USC," he said. "I'm not saying we're not as good a team as that but I think you have a little advantage here where you can stand out and the media will really notice you."

After concluding his collegiate career in the Independence Bowl on Dec. 16 against Tulsa, Oldham will give the

'I only had one year of high school football, so I was really inexperienced. We had three other guys who were Prop 48 with me, but they had more experience in high school.'

— Chris Oldham

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