



Photo by Sean Poston

Play-by-play man Jerry Allen has called games for the Ducks for the past four years.

'Voice of Ducks' fortune leads to broadcast career

By Jake Berg
Emerald Contributor

Nearly 20 years ago, a teen-ager stood in a Grants Pass music store. Looking over the albums, he noticed the man next to him was a local radio station deejay.

The deejay turned to the young man and asked, "Are you interested in radio?"

Smiling, the teen answered simply, "Yah!"

The young Jerry Allen, not realizing that a career on the airwaves of radio awaited him, followed the deejay's instructions and visited the station for training and a possible shot at broadcasting. Allen took a job doing "gopher work" at the station, and eventually climbed the ladder to a deejay position.

Jerry Allen, who once had aspirations of a life in forestry or teaching, is now almost four years old as the official "Voice of the Ducks."

Just by pure luck has he reached the air, he admits.

"That's how it happened. Just a fluke, a real fluke," he said. "Once you get in it, you get hooked."

After a stint on the Grants Pass station, Allen ventured to a Medford station where he did play-by-play sports coverage on the radio of Southern Oregon State College. In the spring of 1986, Allen received a call from University of Oregon Athletic Director Bill Byrne.

"He called and asked 'We have an opening, and we'd like you to come up and do the Ducks,' and I said 'I'll be there,'" remembers Allen.

Since that time, Allen has done the play by play at all the men's basketball and football games via the KPNW Radio (1120 AM, Eugene) station in connection with the Oregon Sports Network.

"It's like a fun hobby," said the veteran sportscaster. "They are paying me to do something I really enjoy doing."

An Oregon man and Duck fan all of his life, Allen says that a friend by the name of Tom Blanchard influenced his views on the Ducks.

Blanchard, Oregon's quarterback in the sixties, went to school with Allen in Grants Pass.

"I really became a Duck fan then," said Allen.

And Allen has really been a Duck fan since then. His KPNW office is adorned with green and yellow paraphernalia of his favorite school, and the man just plain loves the state, the City of Eugene, and the University. But he won't let that interfere with his interpretation of a game on the air.

While doing the play-by-play over a microphone, Allen visualizes a blind friend of his sitting next to him.

With that in mind, Allen said, "I try to convey to (the listeners), in the simplest terms possible, the excitement of what is going on on the field and have them see in their minds just as if they were watching it."

"You're talking to a blind person on the radio," he said. "They are not there. They can't see it. It's really just exactly the same thing."

Oregon's football game with Washington last Saturday brought KPNW the largest crowd it has ever had, Allen said, but the increased number of listeners didn't faze him.

"You get so intense and so worried about the game, I wasn't even thinking about a larger number of people listening," he said. "You know, I was just another fan."

On every Bill Musgrave pass, every Michael McClellan kickoff return, one can here the edge in Allen's voice that says every play is a big play. An edge that will explode into excitement at the referee's signal of six points for the Ducks.

"When you do play-by-play, you're providing a service for people that can't go to the game," Allen said. "It makes you feel good to get those people excited and be a part of the game through you."

For all Duck fans, the last decade ended on its highest note ever with the Ducks' 27-24 Independence Bowl victory over Tulsa. Allen was among those celebrating Oregon's postseason visit. Allen called the bowl a dream come true for everyone in the state of Oregon. "To be part of that ... wow, that was a

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