

# Sports network devoted to Ducks



File photo  
Jerry Allen's broadcasts of Duck basketball games from Mac Court are sent by satellite signal to radio affiliates in less than a second.

By Jake Berg  
Emerald Sports Reporter

The offices of the Oregon Sports Network are in a small, cramped corner of MacArthur Court, but the OSN operation is anything but minor.

The OSN was born almost four years ago when the University's athletic department was faced with either selling its broadcast rights to a flagship station as most schools do, or going "in-house" and handling all of its own broadcasting and promotional decisions. Picking the latter, the athletic department put former Director of Broadcasting and Marketing Jim Schaus in charge of its new baby, the OSN.

"After evaluating the pros and the cons and what would be the best way to go, I think we felt that it would be a good decision to go in-house with our radio network," said Schaus, now the OSN director and an assistant athletic director.

With a flagship station in charge of broadcasting Duck sports, the athletic department would have little control over what direction the television and radio programs would fol-

low; thus, the beginning of the OSN.

The OSN, run by the small staff of Schaus and promotion Director Eileen Sorensen, regulates everything when it comes to the broadcasting and marketing of the athletic programs, and this was the main purpose behind its conception.

Not only does the athletic department have more control over broadcasting and marketing now with the OSN, it has complete control over it. The OSN decides where the broadcasts will be transmitted in the West, who its broadcast affiliates will be, and who will be the announcers for Duck sports.

Schaus gives another main reason why the athletic department decided to take the broadcasting "in-house": more revenue.

By creating the OSN, the athletic department has eliminated a middle-man it would have to go through in order to deal with a flagship station, saving expense and hassle.

With total responsibility of gaining advertisers and promotional marketing for all the Duck sports, the OSN is an attractive package to statewide and regional sponsors that the

athletic department previously hadn't been able to consistently attract.

"Now we're able to put together a one-stop shopping approach to sports sponsorship here at the UO by offering an opportunity for radio, television and promotional tie-ins," Schaus said. "We have that control, and that's what advertisers like."

The control has enabled OSN to expand from radio to the OSN Television Network two years ago, to cable television last year, and to a larger radio broadcast which now reaches 25 different affiliates in Oregon, California, Washington, Idaho and Alaska.

In this "one-stop shopping" package, advertisers are able to place radio and television commercials, get in-stadium exposure through scoreboard or public address messages, hospitality bonuses such as tickets to games, and are also able to promote themselves through coupons offered at the events.

"They (the advertisers) don't have to go to four or five different places to get a complete sponsorship of the UO athletic department," Schaus said. "We can do that."

The OSN has contracted with the University radio station KWAX to serve as a network studio and to help with production work during the broadcast of football and men's basketball games. A station employee dubs in commercials according to the broadcast format and a KWAX engineer is present at all home games.

From the "Voice of the Ducks," OSN sportscaster Jerry Allen, the broadcast runs along a phone line from the site of the event to the KWAX offices and is then sent over another phone line to Los Angeles, L.A. uplinks the signal 22,000 miles to a satellite which will then down-link the broadcast to the radio affiliates. The entire process takes about a second.

Having control of such a large broadcast has its advantages, Schaus said.

"You can decide where the broadcast is going to go, and it helps alumni support, recruiting and a variety of other things," he says.

As far Schaus knows, taking an entire broadcast operation in-house is a rarity among colleges in this nation.

"I would bet there are less than a dozen Division I schools in the country that have in-house broadcast settings," says Schaus. But he notes that it has become somewhat of a trend among professional sports organizations because they have found it profitable to eliminate the middle-man.

However, Schaus refuses to accept credit for the creation of the OSN. He instead praises UO Athletic Director Bill Byrne for the idea and desire to take the broadcast responsibilities into the Athletic Department.

"Bill Byrne deserves the credit as the person who was bold enough to take a little risk and go in-house," he said. "It was an excellent move on his part because I would say that we have probably tripled our radio and TV net revenue because of what we've done."

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