

There's more to a Duck than football and basketball



FROM THE SIDELINES

BY JAKE BERG

Back from break and back to the classroom. Back to the mile-long bookstore lines. Back to reality.

It's enough to make one want to go home for another three weeks of relaxation, 12-hour sleeps and watching CHiPs reruns every weekday night.

But if I went home, it'd be just another three weeks of having to listen to the constant taunts from Beaver fans that I had to endure for the past three weeks. You might know the tune.

"What happened to the football team this year, I thought you were supposed to go to a bowl game?" Smiles and pats on the back follow.

"I forget, who won the Civil

War game? Ha-ha-ha-ha." Sarcastically, of course.

More recently (but still sarcastically), "Your basketball team looked pretty good at the Far West Classic."

Given, I come from a small coastal town that naturally has fewer Duck fans than Beaver fans, being 40 miles closer to Oregon State, but if I have to take credit for the records of the football and men's basketball teams, then I'll be happy to accept the records of all the other Duck teams.

The cold fact of life for these sports, though, is they aren't as visible around the state as they may be in Eugene, no matter how much more successful they may turn out to be.

So far this winter season, the two non-revenue siblings to men's basketball are showing they are national contenders, unlike the men's basketball

team.

Oregon wrestling is off to a 4-0 start and has been a top 20 team all season, and the women's hoops team is having its best beginning in years. The 7-2 women Ducks may have already grabbed more wins than their male counterparts may see at season's end.

More has been written or said about the men's team so far this year than will be said the entire year for the women's team or wrestling squad, although their records will likely be better than that of the men's basketball team. It has always been that way and probably always will until interest goes up in these non-revenue sports.

Attention and interest from the public often reflects the attention given to a certain sport by the media, and vice versa. It's a completely cyclical process that tells one only what

one wants to hear and what it is obligated to.

For a hypothetical example, it is a guarantee that a Duck fan in Portland will hear, see and read more about a men's basketball team that finishes 4-24 than a 24-4 women's team. On the other hand, a 4-24 women's team would probably not be heard from again until the next season preview — the media has its ways of burying stories about a hapless non-revenue sport.

The one exception to unpopular non-revenue sports is Oregon's track and field program, which makes no money but garners a good bit of attention when the season rolls around. Duck track has traditionally been one of the stronger programs in the country, and it being the major spring sport at a University that is in one of the track hotbeds nationally gives it

decent visibility.

Strangely, though, cross country, a program similar to track in many ways, may be the biggest victim of the public's oversight of Oregon's non-revenue sport success.

Really, how many Oregonians realize the women's team was one of the top five in the nation during the last two years? If that happened to the football team or men's basketball team, a statewide holiday would be declared.

So before some Beaver fan decides to start feeling a little good about the one game the Oregon State football team won all season, remember, there are more successful sports besides Oregon football and men's basketball.

Jake Berg is sports editor of the Emerald.

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