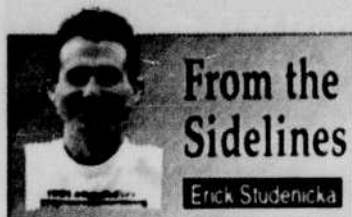


# Trip to Pasadena rough road for smaller schools



**V**isiting Eugene for the first time last week, my brother had all the usual questions.

"Where's the best bar?" "Where's the best Mexican food?" and "What companies are hiring?" were all questions I had an answer for (except for that hiring one), but as we jogged by Autzen Stadium one afternoon, he hit me with a question that caused me to draw a blank.

"When was the last time the Ducks won the Rose Bowl?" he asked.

As a sports reporter, I try to have at least a vague history of Oregon sports. I knew the Ducks had appeared in the Rose Bowl in 1958 under coach Len Casanova but had lost to Ohio State. But for all I know, maybe my brother's question should have been, "Have the Ducks ever won a Rose Bowl?"

A quick survey outside the EMU quickly relieved my notion that I might be the only Rose Bowl-ignorant student on

campus. Guesses on the year of Oregon's last Rose Bowl victory ranged from several "nevers," to a very optimistic "two years ago."

Fairly certain that the Ducks did not win the 1990 Rose Bowl, I checked the media guide to be sure. The guide was very helpful, telling me that USC was the Pac-10 representative in the 1990 Rose Bowl. But perhaps more importantly, it gave me, in full-page detail, the answer to my brother's troubling trivia question.

On Jan. 1, 1917, the Ducks trounced the University of Pennsylvania 14-0 for their only Rose Bowl win. Oregon has also lost the Rose Bowl twice, 7-6 to Harvard in 1920 and 10-7 to Ohio State in 1958.

Now, "In which year did Oregon last win the Rose Bowl?" might make for a good "Trivial Pursuit" question. But in my opinion, the question raises a bigger issue.

Has the Pac-10 become such a tiered conference that it is now impossible for some of the smaller conference schools such as Washington State, Oregon State, and Oregon to realistically expect to ever make a future trip to the Rose Bowl? Should Oregon coaches, players and fans give up the idea of making it to the Rose Bowl and

be satisfied with other bowl appearances, or should the smaller schools leave the Pac-10 and join a conference where they might be more competitive?

Indeed, generations can pass without seeing the Ducks, Beavers or Cougars in the Rose Bowl. The last appearance in a Rose Bowl by one of the smaller Pacific Northwest schools was Oregon State in 1965. The last victory by one of the schools came in 1942 during World War II when Oregon State defeated Duke 20-16.

Washington State is currently experiencing even a worse Rose Bowl drought than the Ducks or Beavers, having last appeared in 1932 and last winning in 1916.

Oregon head coach Rich Brooks, himself a former Oregon State football player, says that although the odds are long, fans shouldn't give up the hope of seeing the Ducks play in the Rose Bowl.

"It's not at all unreasonable to hope to see teams like Oregon and Oregon State and Washington State in the Rose Bowl," Brooks said. "But I do think it is unreasonable to expect those teams in the game year in and year out."

"Every team in the Pac-10 is striving to be at the level of the Washingtons and UCLAs. No

one is conceding anything."

Brooks explained that teams like UCLA, USC and Washington have remained consistent winners over the years for basically simple reasons. All have large population bases from which to recruit within and strong football traditions, which translates to more booster dollars and an easier "sell" for the program.

Former football coach Len Casanova says it was no easier to recruit in the 1950s than it is today.

"Even then it was hard to recruit against the bigger schools, especially USC," Casanova said. "They had proven football records, and it was easy for them to tell a recruit that if he wanted to play in the Rose Bowl, he should go there."

Casanova said his 1958 Rose Bowl squad was an exceptional group.

"They were fighters — very tough. But they were also very conscientious," he said. "To make the Rose Bowl we had to have a certain amount of good fortune, and that's what it will take for Oregon or a smaller school to make the Rose Bowl, some luck and good fortune. But it's still possible to do — very difficult, but still possible."

Casanova also made the ob-

servation that it was somewhat easier for a small school to be successful in the past because not as many players were required.

"Back then players played both defense and offense, so the teams were quite a bit smaller in number," Casanova explained. "A coach wouldn't have to recruit as many players to have a good team."

Brooks feels the smaller schools may even be regaining a recruiting edge that may lure some top players to schools like Oregon.

"A lot of kids coming out of high school are tired of large city life," Brooks said. "A lot want to go to a quiet college town like Eugene nowadays."

As for dropping out of the Pac-10, think only of the University of Idaho and the University of Montana. These schools used to be members of the conference, but dropped out. While Washington arrives in Eugene next week, Idaho and Montana will be playing some no name school in a snowstorm.

So does it really matter that Oregon may not appear in the Rose Bowl for another 50 years? No, it doesn't. Just like trying to get a date with that pretty girl, the excitement is in the chase. The important thing is that, come every fall, the potential exists for the Ducks to make the trip to the Rose Bowl.

I mean, what do they say at Idaho? "This year we have the potential to go to the Raisin Bowl."

Anyways, my brother took off for his home today. His destination was sort of ironic, somewhere I hope the Ducks end up at least once before I die.

He was driving down to Pasadena.

*Erick Studenicka is a sports reporter for the Emerald.*

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**Associated Press College Football Top 25**

First-place votes in parentheses, Pac-10 teams in bold.

- Washington** (42)
- Miami (16)
- Michigan (1)
- Tennessee (2)
- Texas A&M
- Alabama (1)
- Penn St.
- Florida St.
- Colorado
- Virginia
- Stanford**
- Georgia
- Notre Dame
- Nebraska
- Syracuse
- Oklahoma
- Georgia Tech
- Mississippi St.
- UCLA**
- Southern Cal**
- Boston College
- tie. Ohio St.
23. Florida
24. California
25. Clemson
- tie. N. Carolina St.

Others receiving votes:  
West Virginia 90, Wisconsin 74, Washington State 72, Arizona 57, Auburn 43, Hawaii 37, San Diego St. 27, Mississippi 14, North Carolina 13, Kansas 12, Kansas St. 5, Air Force 1, Oregon 1.