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Oregon Daily Emerald Sports-



Duck linebacker Ernest Jones celebrates after a sack in last year's Civil War game in Corvallis.

Ethic, goals accelerate Jones

By Carrie Vincent

Ernest Jones, "right - not weak side" linebacker and defensive captain of Oregon's football team, is a proponent of discipline, both in his chosen sport

"A lot of people think we just run around and hit people," said Jones, who is three or four "hits" away from breaking the Duck record for quarterback sacks. "But it's very disciplined.

Jones, a sociology major, holds up the large book for his human sexuality class

'We have to memorize a play book the size of this," he said. "People just think we're dumb jocks. It's really a thinking man's game."

lones' work ethic is also integral to his position as one of the two captains of the team.

'I'm more of a lead-by-example type of guy. But it's really tough." Jones said of his leading role. He was voted in during spring training by a nearly unanimous decision of his teammates

'There hasn't been a black captain for three years, (so) I get a lot of pressure from the other minorities," said Jones, who admits he has almost quit (being captain) a couple of times. "It took some talking to my mom and talking to my coaches for me to work it out."

Jones now realizes that he can't worry about everyone all of the time.

"I want to do what's right for the team, but I have goals and dreams too," said Jones, who hopes to play professional football "somewhere warm."

Jones said sometimes there are racial tensions on the team, "but I'm going to go pat someone on the butt or on the back no matter if they are black or

Jones humbly, but confidently, believes in him-

"I think I'm very likable," he said. "I treat all my teammates the same.

Although Jones does not regret his decision to come to the West Coast from his East Coast home of Utica, N.Y., he said he really misses his family.

'It's hard for me to really enjoy myself," he said. "I haven't been home for two years." Jones has spent the last couple of holidays with friends' families who have "adopted" him.

Jones said the decision to come to Oregon was

"I hadn't even been on a plane before, much less to Eugene," he said, "and I'd never really left my

His mother, Velma, and his younger sister, Kimberly, 13, are the recipients of several calls each week from lones

"Sometimes, during the holidays, I'll even call a couple of times a day," he said.

It was difficult growing up for Jones because his grandfather, who had his own family to take care of, was his only father figure, even to the point where he called him "Dad." But it wasn't always enough, and he says that used to get him in trouble at school. Jones said his aunts and uncles often thought he wasn't going to get anywhere in life.

But sports, having to take care of his little sister

'People just think we're dumb jocks. It's really a thinking man's game.'

> Ernest Jones, Oregon linebacker

while his mother was working for Blue Cross and as a prison guard, and simply the strength of his mother probably kept Jones on track.

Jones does not drink or smoke, either.

'I don't have any desire to," he said. "I don't let people influence me to do something that will harm my body or someone else." His attitude stems from his mother's warning about peer pres-

Jones also recalled when he was a freshman in high school and went out for the football team that it was his mother, not his coach, who kept him in

"I didn't figure I needed to practice, and I was good enough that my coach figured that was OK. But my mom made me turn my uniform in," said Jones, who eventually straightened up and started going to practice.

Jones, who played quarterback in high school, said his team wasn't very good, probably only winning five games in four years, and he had to recruit schools "instead of them recruiting me." He mailed films of himself to where he wanted to go.

Clemson, Syracuse, Ohio State and Virginia State were among Jones' first choices of schools. But, not believing him to be big enough, they didn't look at him until Oregon recruited him.

Jones was 6-foot-1, 185 pounds when he graduated, and he is 6-foot-2 1/2 inches, 230 pounds now. But by that time it was too late.

"I sent a film out here, and they called me the next day and offered me a scholarship," Jones said.
"I didn't get the respect I felt I deserved (from the East Coast schools).

Jones made the decision to come to Oregon and show the other schools what they would miss.

Aside from his friends' parents that have "adopted" him, Jones spends a lot of his time with Nick Aliotti, who used to be his position coach and is now the defensive coordinator.

"His wife and his family take care of me," Jones said. "I used to get called 'coach's son.' But, (Aliotti) and I talk constantly. He's afraid I'm going to go make it big time and forget about him. But I

Aside from taking a couple of classes this summer so that he can graduate in December, Jones is spending three to four hours a day in preparation for the upcoming season.

"This is my final year, and I know I really have to perform," he said.

Jones doesn't think about how close he is to setting a new record for sacks because "if you're thinking about that, your mind is not on the game. You are only thinking of yourself. That's not dis-