

The year that could have been

OSU

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evident this season. Oregon State currently ranks second in the nation with more than 303 yards rushing per game. The Beavers' offensive backs have combined for 10 100-yard rushing games.

Pac-10 coaches have taken note this year after their teams lost or nearly lost to the Beavers, that a visit with the Beavers is no longer an automatic win. Not that the Beavers have established themselves as Rose Bowl contenders yet, but they are becoming increasingly competitive.

"This year's Oregon State team is the best I have seen in the last several years," Oregon head coach Rich Brooks said this week.

When Pettibone took over the program in 1991, he inherited a young team and preached patience. He knew it would take a while for the system to get intact and working smoothly. Although a lot of the young players that were around at the start of the program are now graduating and moving on, Pettibone said he expects the next generation of Beavers to continue the strong play.

"I feel good about the development of the younger players on the team," Pettibone said. "Forty-seven of our top 60 players this year will be back next year, so I feel good about the future."

And so do the many Beaver fans who have had nothing to get excited about except the possibility of a bright future for the past two decades.

During the few moments we have left before the Civil War begins and the football season ends, let's look at the year that might have been:

Oct. 2, at California. This was a wild one. Oregon blows a 30-0 lead. Late in the fourth quarter Cal scores a touchdown to make the score 41-40 Oregon.

The Golden Bears decide to go for two. Cal offensive coordinator and former Duck coach Denny Schuler stands on the sidelines thinking. "If I were defensive coordinator for a team whose opponent's offensive coordinator used to be the other team's defensive coordinator, what would I not expect the offensive coordinator who knows the opponents defense to do on offense?"

An exasperated Schuler yells "I'm going to have an ulcer!" Ironically, "have an ulcer" was a play used by the Cal offense last season. The Cal offense is unsure how Schuler knew the play but runs it anyway. The play gets two receivers open in the end zone, but the left side of the offensive line forgets the blocking scheme. Quarterback Dave Barr is sacked, and the Ducks win.

After the game Oregon head coach Rich Brooks blames his offense for his defense's collapse. "They scored so quickly that the defense has no time to rest," he said. Derrick Deadwiler apologizes for his 234 yards receiving and catches 16 passes for 12 yards in his next game. The Oregon running backs, who gained 281 yards against Cal, apologize by not rushing for more than 100 yards in a game for the rest of the season.

Oct. 9, USC. Oregon is 4-0 and ranked 23rd. USC receiver Johnnie Morton goes wild early on, catching seven passes and scoring a touchdown, and USC leads 14-10 at the half.

Attempting to shut down Oregon's passing attack, frustrated USC coach John Robinson plays Morton at defensive back in the second half. Morton wreaks havoc on the Oregon passing game, intercepting two passes in the third quarter before absorbing a crushing hit from Duck tight end Willy Tate on a short route across the middle.

Morton lies unconscious on the field for several minutes. His first words after being revived are reported to be



SCOTT SIMONSON

"Don't want to go to school, Mommy. Don't feel very good." Morton returns to the game but isn't his usual self. He catches three passes in the fourth quarter but drops a potential game winner in the end zone. Oregon wins 20-17.

Oct. 23, at Washington. Oregon is 6-0 and ranked 13th. The Huskies lead 7-6 in the second half when tailback Napoleon Kaufman breaks a 58-yard touchdown run. The play is called back: Washington is penalized for stealing the stereo and hucaps from the Oregon team bus at halftime.

Danny O'Neil throws six interceptions, and the Ducks trail 14-6 late in the game. Trying to bolster his quarterback's confidence, Brooks sends in Alex Molden and Chad Cota as receivers on Oregon's final drive. Having thrown completions to defensive backs all day, O'Neil completes six passes to Molden and Cota on the final possession of the game. Oregon scores and converts a two-point conversion to tie Washington 14-14.

Three Washington football players, all white and with bad haircuts, are arrested for breaking into the Oregon bus. The *Emerald* follows its policy for crime suspects and runs a candid shot of the players carp fishing with shotguns. The *Emerald* is pilloried for condoning the type of environmental irresponsibility that has caused a global crisis. The *Emerald* apologizes and runs pictures of nothing but Frisbee-catching dogs for three weeks.

Nov. 6, at Arizona. Arizona leads 14-0 after surprising the ninth-ranked Ducks with an option attack. Oregon appears finished until an Oregon coach says, "Hey, isn't this Oregon State's offense?"

After seeing Arizona quarterback Chuck Levy throw his first pass, the Oregon bench collapses in paroxysms of laughter. Oregon puts 10 men on the line of scrimmage and stuffs the option. The Wildcat receivers

are open all night, but Levy throws the football like it's a watermelon. But Arizona's defense make an early lead hold up, and the Ducks lose 14-10.

Nov. 13, Stanford. Oregon is 7-1-1 and ranked 14th and is still in Rose Bowl contention. Both defenses look hapless. In a game with no turnovers and no punts, Oregon loses 77-75. After ten kickoffs and nine extra points, Tommy Thompson gets a cramp in his right leg. Thompson attempts his last two extra points left-footed and misses both. Stanford coach Bill Walsh, nicknamed "The Genius," says afterward, "I knew that would happen."

In an unrelated incident, the *Emerald* runs a photo calling Walsh "The Genius." The *Emerald* is pilloried for trying to create stereotypes of old white people as having superior intelligence. The *Emerald* apologizes and promises to confine remarks denoting superior intelligence to photos of Frisbee-catching dogs.

Nov. 20, Oregon State. Oregon is 7-2-1, ranked 18th and assured of a bowl berth. It's the usual Civil War battle, with both teams pulling out all the stops and gimmick plays.

Oregon wins 35-28. On fourth and goal in the fourth quarter, Oregon runs the option for six yards and scores a touchdown. Oregon State has a chance to tie, but its trick play on fourth down fails. "That wasn't a trick play. That was a pass," Oregon State coach Jerry Pettibone says afterward.

Jan. 1, Michigan. Oregon plays in the Fiesta Bowl, sponsored by Velveeta. A dozen Duck football players are sidelined with what they claim is food poisoning from American cheese fondue, but the bowl sponsors deny the charge.

Oregon players play an emotional game against the Wolverines. Brooks tells the Ducks in a pregame speech, "If this was basketball, we'd be in trouble. But we can beat this team. Don't be intimidated. These guys are no different from Wake Forest. Treat this like just another bowl game." For the second consecutive year, Oregon takes a 29-10 lead but loses 39-35.

It may not be a happy ending, but it beats real life.

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