

Ducks look to fill in holes during spring

By Steve Mims
Oregon Daily Emerald

Members of the Oregon football team began spring drills yesterday, trying to put last season behind them and answer questions that lie ahead.

The Ducks agree almost unanimously that 1993 was a lost season, one filled with a lot of potential early on and disappointment by the 5-6 finish. The start of spring practice is the unofficial start of the 1994 season, and the Ducks are glad to see it finally arrive.

"I'm anxious to get out there," Oregon head coach Rich Brooks said. "We have a lot to prove to ourselves. We failed to achieve what we were capable of last year, and we need to redirect ourselves mentally."

Brooks seems confident in his team's physical abilities, as the Ducks return a number of players who have proved themselves on the field. The mental side is a different issue, as Brooks and his players agree that the team must get tougher.

"People are always enthusiastic until things get tough," Brooks said. "As things started to go against us we didn't respond well to the adversity."

Quarterback Danny O'Neil had a great season statistically, completing 62 percent of his passes for 3,087 yards and 22 touchdowns. However, O'Neil has never led a team to a come-from-behind victory, a fact that is a stigma to him and has given critics an arsenal to fire with.

"That's something I want to improve on," O'Neil said, "to show myself and everybody else that I have the ability to come back to win myself."

O'Neil made no promises about the upcoming season, referring all questions about expectations to his coach. After a year of unfulfilled goals, O'Neil will keep them inside this year.

"As far as expectations, I don't have any," O'Neil said. "Last year I gave a lot of expectations and they didn't come to fruition, so I'll bypass expectations this year."

However, that doesn't mean O'Neil hasn't set personal and team goals for next season.

"There are a lot of areas we need to improve on," the senior-to-be said. "One area I'd like to improve on individually is having the will to win, overcoming circumstances or tough days at practice, whatever it might be, overcoming some obstacles and still having the will to win. That's what separates the good teams."

So why wasn't Oregon a good team last year?

"I don't think we had (the will to win) last year. I think it's pretty obvious we lost a lot of tight games," O'Neil said.

Enough about 1993. O'Neil looks at a strong off-season as being the first key to turning it around next year. The Ducks had a lot of players working out and playing football together during the off-season, and O'Neil hopes that will translate into more victories on the field.

"I'm not going to say there's going to be a change because it must be proven," O'Neil said. "In the off-season we had more people out there in 7-on-7 games than we ever had, and that's a

sign to me that this year's team is more dedicated than teams in the past."

Brooks agreed the team worked hard in the off-season but said he wasn't sure how much that would run over to next year.

"It's been one of the best off-seasons we've ever had," Brooks said. "But off-seasons are just that — they're off-seasons. We need to carry that attitude on the field the whole time consistently, from week to week, not only this spring but also this fall. That's sometimes where that message gets lost in the transition."

On the field, the Ducks must overcome the loss of a talented senior class that includes as many as four possible NFL draft choices. Making matters worse,

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Arkansas relishes title, looks ahead

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Arkansas basketball fans, savor the moment. It was some kind of finish to some kind of year:

- a first NCAA championship.
- a No. 1 seed in the Midwest Regional.
- a No. 1 ranking for nine weeks.

No matter what coach Nolan Richardson has told his players about no respect, this team now resides at the summit of college basketball.

Whether there will be a return to the summit next year is another matter. The Razorbacks will have just about all of their players back, but that guarantees precious little.

In 1990, when Todd Day, Lee Mayberry and Oliver Miller were sophomores, the Razorbacks made it to the Final Four.

Wait 'til next year, people said.

In 1991, Arkansas lost in the finals of the Southeast Regional.

Then thoughts turned to Day, Mayberry and Miller as seniors in 1992. By that time, they were probably all ready for the NBA and Arkansas lost to Memphis State in the second

round of the tournament.

This 1994 group was special - they genuinely enjoyed playing the game. Outside of the Kentucky game in the Southeastern Conference tournament, they played hard every game.

There was no jealousy. Not when Al Dillard was getting all kinds of notice for his long-range shooting. Not when a TV technician used an electronic illustrator to expound on Corliss Williamson's shaved head.

Guys on the bench swooned at their teammate's dunks and 3s. Everybody swooned at Scotty Thurman's killer 3-pointer with 50 seconds left Monday night in the 76-72 victory over Duke.

The only two seniors are Roger Crawford, who broke his ankle in the second round of the NCAA tournament, and Ken Biley.

Crawford started four games and averaged more than seven points per game. His biggest contribution came when he relieved Corey Beck or Clint McDaniel in the pressure defense.

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