

AD finalist prefers Oregon challenge



CUNNINGHAM

Kris Henry
Oregon Daily Emerald

The third of four finalists for the Oregon athletic director position visited Eugene on Thursday and spoke of his desire for a new challenge.

Gary Cunningham, current athletics director at Fresno State, expressed his interest in the Oregon post based on his knowledge of the league and his readiness to accept a challenge.

"I'm a problem solver," Cunningham said. "I think the one thing I've done wherever I've been is build things. I like to go forward and I think those challenges are here."

His resume speaks volumes about what Cunningham could offer Oregon as its first full-time athletic director since Bill Byrne left for Nebraska in September 1992.

Cunningham began his career in athletics in 1965 as the UCLA freshman men's basketball coach. He then moved up to the assistant post on the varsity squad from 1967-75. He was the executive director of the UCLA alumni association in the two following years before becoming UCLA's head men's basketball coach from 1977-79.

He held the athletics director position at Western Oregon State

College from 1979-81 and then transferred to the University of Wyoming to handle the same post from 1981-86. Cunningham has been at the helm of Fresno State athletics for the past nine years.

This type of experience allows Cunningham to be confident when he says he knows the athletics director position and is able to succeed in a prime athletic program.

"Whoever comes here should want to be here in the worst way and I think that's a fit for me," he said. "I think I could go into the Pac-10 as athletic director

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FRIDAY

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Ducks conclude drills with annual Spring Game

The Oregon football team wraps up its spring drill on Saturday with the annual Spring Game at 1 p.m. in Autzen Stadium.

The game, which pits the first units against the remainder of the squad, is free to the public. The contest will be of regulation length with possible adjustments in the timing during the second half.

Club baseball tournament starts today

After Thursday's scheduled opening games were rained out, the Oregon Club Baseball Tournament will get underway today at Sheldon High School.

Humboldt State and Central Oregon square off at 11 a.m. and Western Washington takes on the host Oregon squad at 7:30 p.m. to complete the first day's action.

The four-team field will continue play on Saturday in round-robin action at Willamette High School. The school will also serve as the host to Sunday's nine-inning championship game at noon.

Oregon tennis players meet with mixed results

Oregon's Hans Forseberg dropped a three-set match at the Pac-10 Individual Championships in Ojai, Calif., on Thursday.

Dougal Williams chalked up a win while Josh Prager dropped his match in the College Invitational Meet also taking place at Ojai.

Doubles action starts Friday.

Lacrosse team heads to Portland

The Oregon men's lacrosse team, 4-4 in league and 6-6 overall, will travel to Portland this weekend for a series of pivotal league games. The Portland Delta Park tournament will play host to some of the top collegiate men's lacrosse teams in the section as well as some of the top men's club teams.

The pool of 30 teams from Washington, California and Oregon will battle through two days of stiff competition in the season's toughest tournament.

Oregon crew takes to foreign waters

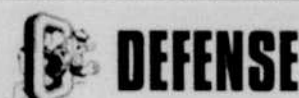
Fresh off its sweeping victory at Dexter Reservoir last weekend, the Oregon crew team will travel to Tacoma, Wash., for the Cascade Sprints on Saturday.

Waters takes over experienced Gang

Trevor Kearney
Oregon Daily Emerald

After its defense helped lead it to the ultimate of postseason play, the Oregon football team lost four defensive starters to graduation and a defensive coordinator to the NFL.

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defensive coordinator Charlie Waters. And enter a solution to half of the postseason problem that the Ducks were trying to solve.

To solve the other half of the problem — that is, filling the positions that nose tackle Silila Malepeai, strong safety Chad Cota, cornerback Herman O'Berry and free safety Jeff Sherman left open — Waters only had to add a touch of his motivation to an already talented roster to find the answer.

"You need to put the players in a scheme that best suits the players," Waters said of deciding what position an athlete should play. "I don't ever ask a player to do something I don't think they can do because I've had to do it all myself."

As it is now, that decision puts itself-to-be Bryant Jackson at nose tackle, freshman sensation Kenny Wheaton at right cornerback, three-year letterman Brian Collins at free safety and senior-to-be Dante Lewis at strong safety.

"It seems to be a good fit right now," Waters said. "I don't know if we can replace those guys (that graduated), but we can put new ones out there that are going to do different things better — and maybe other things not as good — but have adequate replacements."

Adequate indeed.

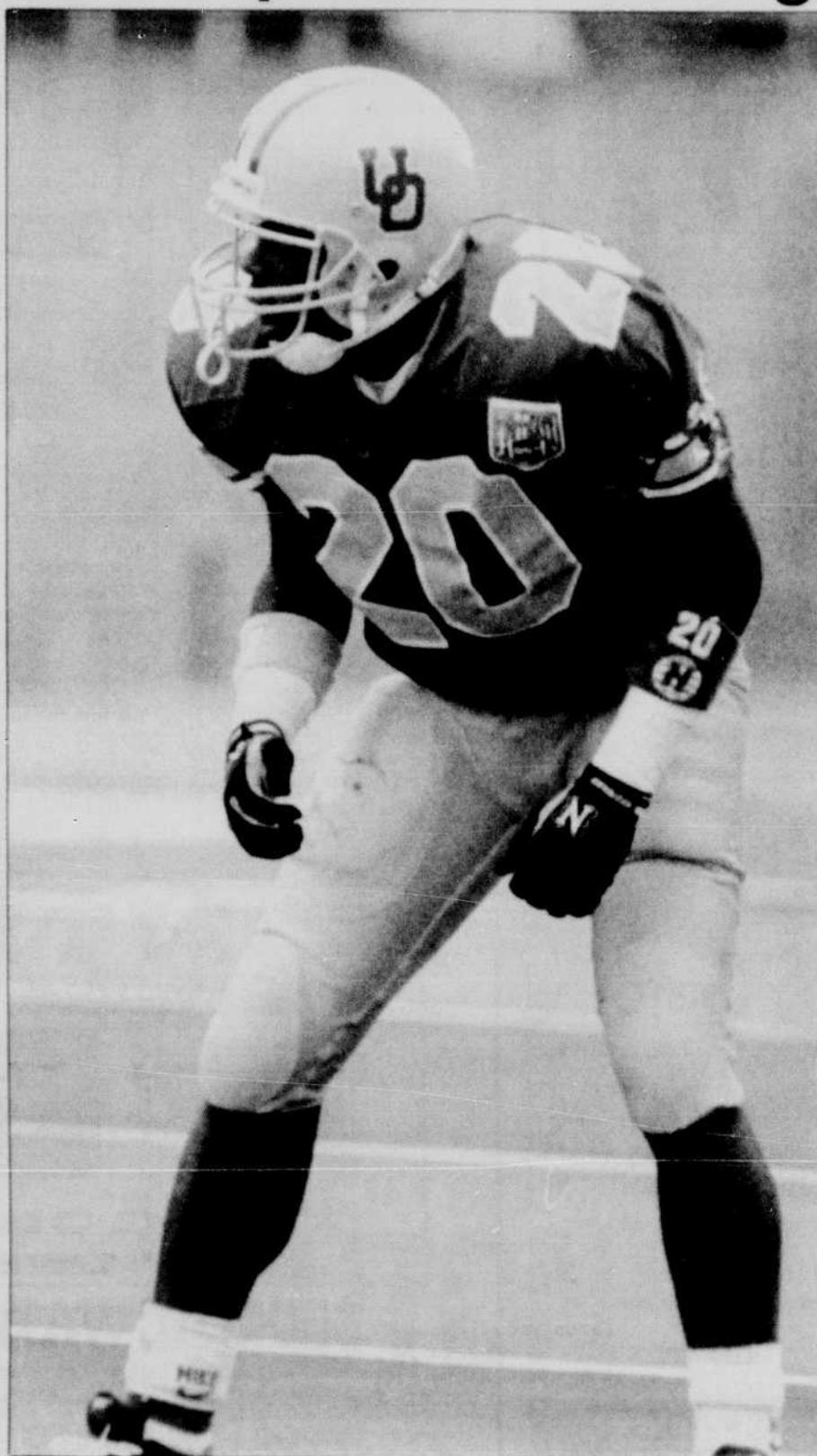
This spring, Lewis has intercepted seven passes in live drills, and Collins and Jackson have had strong individual outings. The defensive squad as a whole has appeared all but unfazed by the losses, as the first team has not allowed a touchdown all spring long.

"Brian Collins has been very solid at the free safety position," Waters said. "Dante Lewis has had an extraordinary spring, if not the best spring of the defensive backs."

"They play with a lot of pride," Waters said, adding that the team is particularly proud of having not allowed a spring touchdown. "They pride themselves on that. The players really play well together, they get along with each other real well, which is a great break for me."

That break dates back to last year, when the defense was one of the major factors in the team's overall success.

"When I watched the film on these guys, it was evident that they play with a lot of heart, a lot of desire, and a lot of commitment and pride," Waters said. "The Gang Green theme



Defensive wonder-kid Kenny Wheaton packs a year of experience into his already powerful bag of tricks in 1995 and looks to be one of the keys to the Oregon defense.

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