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Oregon considers recruiting in Texas

■ **RECRUITS:** The Cotton Bowl loss doesn't necessarily make the state off limits, coach says

By Trevor Kearney
Sports Editor

When the Oregon football team first earned a bid to the Cotton Bowl Classic, one of the most attractive perks of the accomplishment was the opportunity to showcase their talent in one of the most football-rich regions in the country.

Add a Dallas connection in defensive coordinator Charlie Waters, a former Dallas Cowboy standout, and the Ducks looked to be on the verge of finally tapping recruits from an area that had all but eluded them in previous years.

"When Charlie came to us when I hired him prior to spring," head coach Mike Bellotti said, "we talked about the fact that we ought to consider recruiting Texas because, obviously, of his name recognition value."

Texas isn't a state that Oregon has pumped in the past — not the Ducks, anyway. While Oregon State has a handful of Texans on its roster, the Ducks don't have any on this year's squad.

"Certainly the combination of playing here in the Dallas area and Charlie's name and the history — obviously he is still a very popular figure in this area for good reason — made it a natural that we should recruit this area," Bellotti said.

But after a 38-6 rout at the hands of Colorado, the Ducks' stock in Texas lost a bit of its luster.

"The opportunity looked a little brighter before the game," Bellotti said after the game. "I think that obviously we didn't put on a show that would impress a lot of people. The fact that we are here and the style and play of our defense for the most part was pretty impressive, but unfortunately the scoreboard didn't show that. I would hope that we would get the opportunity to come back here again so we could put on a little bit better showing."

But the game and the Ducks' woes aside, Oregon is still in good position to use the exposure to its advantage.

"Being in back-to-back New Year's Day bowl games has given us a little bit better name recognition, not just on the West

Coast, where we had it, but across the nation," Bellotti said. "So we have and will continue to recruit Texas."

Likewise, Colorado head coach Rick Neuheisel has seen the benefits of just playing in Texas.

"I think first of all playing in a bowl as prestigious as the Cotton Bowl helps you just by being here," Neuheisel said. "But obviously, with the advent of the Big 12, it hopefully will enhance our stature in Texas, young kids who are interested in being student athletes hopefully will look at Boulder."

And Bellotti pointed out that recruiting isn't a one-game, one-month or even one-year task, so all is not lost for the Ducks in the state of Texas.

"It won't be a one-year proposition," he said. "It will be probably two to three, maybe four years before we decide exactly to continue, to drop it or whatever. You can't just do it in one year. There is a need to develop contacts, to get one or two guys (into the area). You get hot by getting a recruiter into an area, he gets one or two kids, the next year they talk to one or two other kids and you get a pipeline going."

In fact, Bellotti said, the loss won't affect the school's decisions on whether or not to recruit within Texas.

"You can't just go in on a six month deal and expect to recruit people on any kind of a standard basis," he said. "You have to establish the tie-ins, the guidelines, get the coaches to know the coaches in that area, get a player or two and then it sets up sort of a pipeline, and it doesn't happen in six months."

"Now, this opportunity was as good as I think as we can get, and I hope that we can capitalize on it. We will find out over the course of the next few weeks."

And whether Texas is the place Oregon will look to for future Ducks or not, Bellotti said now is the time to look to new places for recruits.

"The other thing, with the requirements and such, there are fewer people being eligible," said Bellotti, who left with Waters the day after the Cotton Bowl on a recruiting trip to Colorado, of all places. "You have to expand your recruiting territories a little bit to find eligible athletes, so this is a natural for us."

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Grapplers take second at Great Plains Invite

The Oregon wrestling team continued its recent success in tournament competition Saturday with a runner-up finish at the Great Plains Invitational in Lincoln, Neb. The Ducks tallied 131.5 points to finish behind third-ranked Nebraska (174).

Two-time all-American Kevin Roberts, currently ranked third in the nation, took first place at 118 pounds with a 6-4 victory over Nebraska's Brad Canoyer in

the final.

Oregon's other champion, fourth-ranked Scott Norton, dominated his weight class at 150. He defeated Nebraska's Jason Kraft, 6-2, in the final.

The Ducks received significant contributions from the other lower weights. John Taylor (126) and Blake Tompkins (134) placed second and Jeremy Ensrud (134) and Rob Tanner (142) placed third at their respective weights.