



**TODAY'S BEST BET**  
Men's Golf  
PGA Championship,  
TBS (3), 9 a.m.

# SPORTS

Oregon Daily  
**Emerald**

## Ducks begin practice amid questions and uncertainty

**FOOTBALL:**  
Oregon's inexperienced offensive and defensive lines and secondary are head coach Mike Bellotti's biggest worries

By Alex Roper  
Sports Reporter

With the stinging disappointment of missing a bowl game for the first time in three seasons still fresh in their minds, Oregon football players begin practice today.

Not since 1989 have the Ducks had two straight non-bowl seasons, which is what the team will look to avoid as it begins its 1997 season Sept. 4 against Arizona.

The Ducks went 6-5 a last season, a disappointing mark for a team coming off back-to-back Rose and Cotton bowl appearances. Yet the team finished strong, winning its last three games convincingly.

Head coach Mike Bellotti said they believe that streak got the Ducks back on track and hopes that momentum carries over to this season.

"We're real excited," Bellotti said. "We'd like to pick up where we left off last year. We thought that we finished very strong and set a great foundation for this year."

There are a number of questions facing this season's team as it looks to replace 13

starters from its 1996 team.

The biggest question mark surrounding the team comes in the form of the offensive line, which will have the task of replacing what some call the best line in Oregon history.

David Weber is the lone returning starter, taking up the right tackle spot, and he is confident the newcomers can and will get the job done.

"It's a valid concern," Weber said, "but I don't see it as a problem. I see it as more of a blessing because all this inexperience will bring a sense of excitement that we haven't seen around here in a long time."

Center Seaton Daly and guard Stefan deVries saw some playing time last season and will be counted on this season, Bellotti said.

"I expect them to be among our leaders," he said.

Bellotti is also high on the newcomers to the offensive line and said some may see immediate playing time.

"Those athletes in the offensive line,

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## Maas heads Oregon's QB list, but Smith will get first start

True, junior college transfer quarterback Akili Smith had problems learning the Ducks' offense during spring practice.

Also true, Smith is No. 2 behind junior Jason Maas on Oregon's depth chart going into the Ducks' first practice today.

But that distinction won't last long. Come 7:30 p.m., on Sept. 4, it will be Smith taking the first snap of the Ducks' 1997 season opener against Arizona — not Maas.

It isn't so much that Maas, in his fourth season with the Ducks, isn't right for the job. He is fully capable of taking over where Danny O'Neil and Tony Graziani left off and leading the Ducks' traditionally powerful offense.

It is that Bellotti and the Oregon

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OPINION  
**Ryan Frank**

### SUMMER RECREATION

# Over the Top

The Skinner Butte climbing wall has been one of Eugene's hottest summer recreation spots since the early 1960s

By Joel Hood  
Sports Reporter

As it turns out, the hottest place to spend the dog days of summer may be the carved climbing wall on the north side of Skinner Butte.

Climbing "The Columns," as it is referred to by locals, is cheap summertime recreation for hundreds of local rock climbers. But beware, on any given Saturday the old quarry can be home to as many as 50 climbers, all just looking for their piece of the rock.

Veteran climber Bill Soule has found his piece of the rock. Soule has been scaling the Skinner Butte columns for more than 25 years and now joins other local climbers in preserving and protecting one of Eugene's most popular summer hang outs.

"There are a few groups of people who help with the rock's upkeep," Soule said. "The columns get a lot of work during the summer. We put in bolts and anchors for climbers to use. We are most concerned with just keeping the rock safe for climbers to use."

While there are many different forms of rock climbing, Soule maintains that the best piece of equipment to bring along is an experienced climber,

one who knows the correct way to fasten ropes, slings and harnesses.

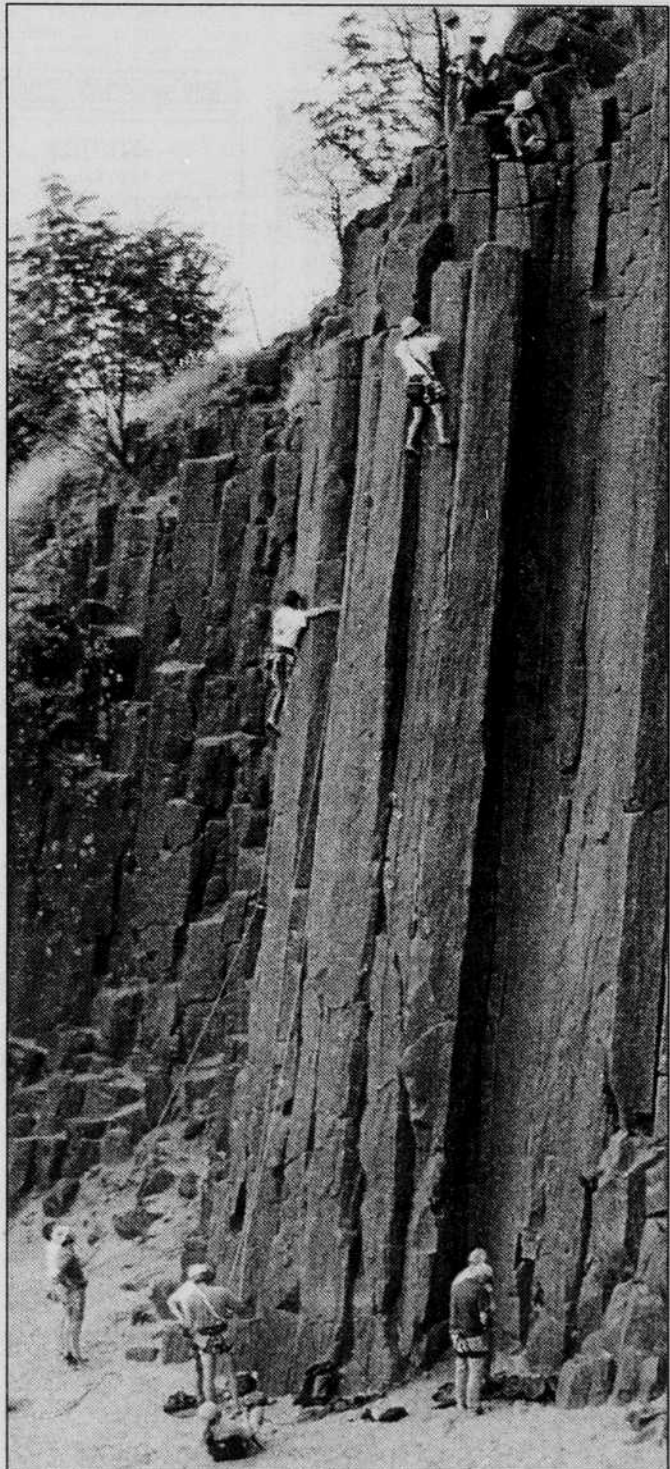
"There is no substitute for an experienced climber," Soule said. "Equipment needs vary with different kinds of climbs. The best way to start is with an experienced climber."

From the Oregon Cascades to the Swiss Alps, in his 26 years of climbing, Soule has just about done it all.

The Eugene resident was once part owner of Timberline Lodge on Mt. Hood and has guided rock climbing tours all over the state.

Soule tells beginners to seek out a good instructor before they scale their first cliff side. A good instructor, Soule said, is one who gives the young climber the reasons behind the climbing techniques. This assures them they can move safely under all circumstances.

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CHAD PATTESON/Emerald

"The Columns" on Skinner Butte is a favorite spot for University student climbers Steve Tyrill and Garth Fisher, far right.

