

Prior to Saturday, when was the last time a Duck returned an interception for a touchdown?

These games come few and far between

Few who watched Sunday night's Game 7 of the World Series will remember the major players in the game's outcome.

While Jaret Wright, Edgar Renteria and Craig Counsell are names that any Rotisserie player has known for at least a year, they will be long forgotten in a month to fans such as the four roommates who joined me to watch the extra frames Sunday.

Of course, this was after an hour-and-a-half of the Simpsons, but the point is that these were not baseball fans. These were

people who, when I asked them who they thought would win, asked me, "Wait, who's playing again?"

But after not watching a game for one year, they gathered around the TV to enjoy the excitement that only Game 7 of a World Series can produce.

Granted, baseball is a game that does not hold the social standing it once did, but with all the talk of how TV ratings are the lowest in years, how fan interest has never been worse and how the game is in shambles, baseball delivered.

Just as it did in '95 with Seattle's dramatic three-game comeback in the division series against the Yankees, the game delivered a contest that transcended generations; forget the last few years, forget recent memory, this could have been one of the greatest games ever.

For the first six innings, the game unfolded as anything but spectacular. Indian second baseman Tony Fernandez's two-run single in the second off Al Leiter provided Cleveland with a small, if not safe, lead.

That lead stood through six due to the efforts of Cleveland starter Jaret Wright, a 21-year-old with a 95-mile-per-hour fastball and no fear. Wright did nothing flashy, threw no trick pitches. He allowed one hit through six innings by rearing back and throwing the ball right by the Marlin hitters.

But when he tried to do the same to Bobby Bonilla on the first pitch of the seventh, Bonilla crushed it halfway to Pittsburgh.

Wright left two batters later, and the Indians' bullpen did its job, holding that 2-1 lead until the ninth, when closer Jose Mesa took over. Mesa was able to pitch this year only after avoiding prosecution for rape in spring training, but when he finally did he was one of baseball's most dominating closers.

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GUARDS



EMERALD

Point guard Natalie Hughes helped lead the Ducks to a second-place finish in the Pac-10 and earn a trip to the NCAA Tournament last season. But in 1997-98, second place will not be enough for Hughes and the Ducks.

Second place not an option for Oregon

Oregon guards Natalie Hughes and Lisa Bowyer are ready to lead the Ducks to a Pac-10 conference title

By Alex Pond
Sports Reporter

Second place will not be good enough for the Ducks this season.

"We're out to win the Pac-10 Championship," point guard Natalie Hughes said.

Hughes helped the Oregon women's basketball team to a second place finish in the Pacific-10 Conference last season, but she will not settle for that in 1997-98.

"I've done it once, and I'm sick of it," she said.

Hughes, along with veteran Lisa Bowyer, returns to lead a deep backcourt whose performance could go a long way toward determining whether or not the Ducks reach their goal of a conference title.

In all likelihood, Hughes and Bowyer will be the starters.

Hughes started 10 games for the Ducks last season, averaging 9.2 points per game and a team-high 88 assists. She became the team's full-time starter the last

seven games of the season, averaging 14.9 points and 5.1 assists in that role.

She possesses a deadly outside shot, connecting on 33 percent of her three-point attempts last season, and is also a dangerous defender, posting a team-high 41 steals.

"I have to try to encourage and get the flow of the game going," Hughes said. "The point guard is usually not a big scorer, but I'm going to look to score but mainly just lead the team."

The Oregon guards should find themselves open frequently this season with the likelihood that center Jenny Mowe will consistently be double-teamed down low.

"We're definitely going to look to pass inside for Jenny Mowe or Sonja [Curtis] and all the big guys to score," Hughes said, "but when they start scoring we're going to get the shots outside anyway. We'll get to score."

Bowyer agrees that Mowe's presence will open

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Guards

■ **HUGHES:** The Ducks' leading returner in points, steals and assists

■ **BOWYER:** Oregon's top returning three-point shooter at 39 percent

This is the first of a three-part series on the women's basketball team.

Oregon will use bye week to work on fundamentals of game

The Ducks need to recoup their mental and physical health, head coach Mike Bellotti said

By Chris Hansen
Assistant Sports Editor

In the aftermath of a critical loss to Southern California, Oregon enters its bye week with some definite things to work on before its Nov. 8 game against Washington in Seattle.

Most pressing will be the recuperation of the players' mental and physical health after another devastating Pacific-10 Conference loss, the team's fourth defeat in five games.

Equally as important is working on football fundamentals such as tackling on the team readies itself for the No. 7 Huskies.

"We are going to take the approach that we will have one, possibly two, full-speed, full-contact days [of practice] this week working on the fundamentals and maybe with an eye ahead to Washington," head coach Mike Bellotti said. "But our main focus will be on ourselves and our tackling."

Bellotti said the team will try to find a way to get the defensive lineman into the game more, something that will be critical not only against Washington, but also against Arizona State on Nov. 15.

The mental healing of the team may take a little longer. Oregon's four losses have all been heartbreakers, but none of them were as gut wrenching as Saturday's 24-22 loss to the Trojans on Joshua Smith's last-second missed field-goal attempt. Now the Ducks have nearly two weeks to let that loss simmer and stew in their minds.

"Had we been able to pull that game out," Bellotti said, "it would have obviously been a very positive feeling that we could carry through this two-week period. Now we have to exorcise the ghosts of the USC game before we can get on to Washington."

That could be eased now that Oregon is headed out of October. The Ducks are 9-0 in

November, over the last three seasons, last losing Nov. 20, 1993, to Oregon State.

"There is obviously great pressure for us to win in November," Bellotti noted. "I think in the last three years we haven't lost a game in November, and that has been the key to a successful season."

Because of that, Oregon shouldn't be counted down for the count just yet. Last season the Ducks went into their last bye week at 3-5, having lost five games in row, but they finished strong with three decisive Pac-10 victories that nearly put them in the Aloha Bowl.

"We're a better football team than last year," Bellotti said. "We go on the road now and have two very difficult games against two teams that are playing very well. There is a tremendous challenge to us to respond to the opportunity. And obviously we know

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"Now we have to exorcise the ghosts of the USC game before we can get on to Washington."

Mike Bellotti
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