

WEDNESDAY
Oct. 21, 1998**Best Bet**World Series
New York at San Diego
5:20 p.m., FOX

Claiborne anchors Trojan defense

The USC linebacker relies on his natural talent and not just his jersey to bring him success

By Joel Hood
Oregon Daily Emerald

It's just a jersey, but there are some who believe it possesses special powers.

It's brickhouse-red nylon and gold mesh, which is all at once the ugliest get-up this side of Disco, and the most fashionable cloak in Southern California.

Junior Seau adorned the No. 55 jersey during the 1989 season when the senior linebacker recorded 19 sacks en route to first-team all-American honors.

Two seasons later, No. 55 was worn by defensive end Willie McGinest, who was named USC's defensive player of the year as a junior and a first-team all-American as a senior.

"I think Claiborne is the best of the bunch [including Seau and McGinest]."

Mike Bellotti
Oregon head coach

Not unrelated, both Seau and McGinest became first-round NFL draft choices and a short time later became all-pros.

So it's no surprise, considering the history of Southern California's No. 55 jersey, that Chris Claiborne jumped at the chance to have this prestigious cloth around his shoulder pads for

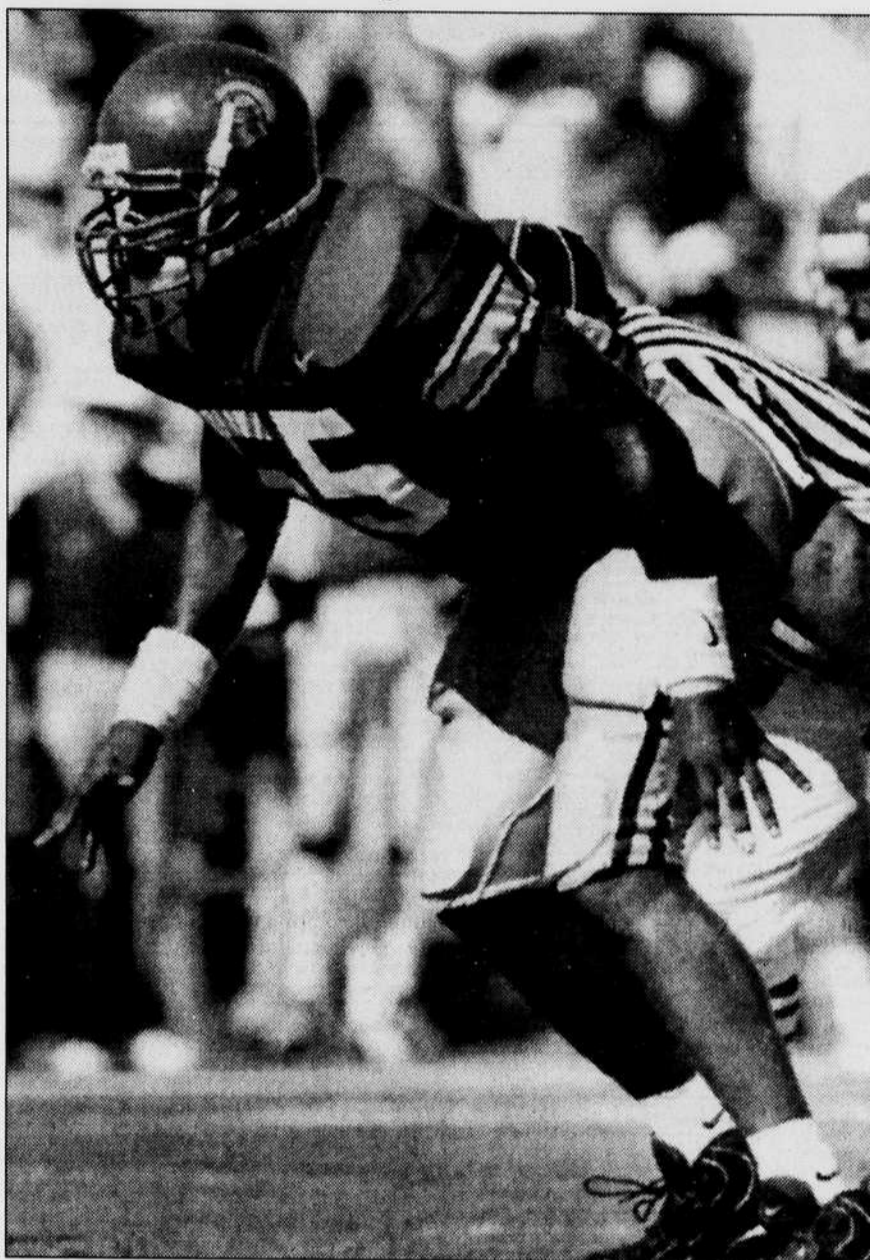
the duration of his Trojan career.

And it's certainly no surprise to those who recruited Claiborne that he has filled that role impressively.

As a true freshman in 1996, the 6-foot-3, 250-pound Claiborne was named to the freshman all-America team by The Sporting News and was a Pacific-10 Conference honorable mention pick. He started nine of 12 games that season, recording 116 tackles — the most ever by a Trojan freshman — one fumble recovery, one forced fumble, seven deflections and two interceptions.

Startling numbers for a freshman, but not nearly as startling as the numbers he put up as a senior at J.W. North High School in Riverside, Calif., in 1995.

At linebacker Claiborne recorded a



Linebacker Chris Claiborne is nominated for both all-American and Butkus Award honors this season.

team-high 117 tackles, two interceptions, two fumble recoveries and a pair of sacks. At tailback, he scored 38 touchdowns while rushing for 2,199 yards on just 239 carries, a 9.4 yards-per-carry average. At receiver, Claiborne caught 17

passes for 239 yards and three touchdowns. At punter, he carried a 35-yard average.

People were taking notice. Claiborne

Turn to **CLAIBORNE**, Page 12A

New season starts for UO students

Club Sports begins a new season this fall, offering many different opportunities for students

By Brett Williams
for the Emerald

There will never be hundreds of people to watch them play. The possibility of a lucrative contract offer in their sport after college is nil. They play their respective sport for the same reason they began to in grade school — because they love doing it.

Club Sports begins its 30th season at Oregon this fall, with everything from equestrian to soccer on tap. Athletes such as soccer player Paul Bach exemplify the 100 percent effort that is given by many club sports players, according to his coach Chad Wright.

"He's one of those guys who shows up a half hour before practice and is very dedicated," said Wright, who plays on the soccer club team as well. "He and other players have prepared for the season by weight lifting and getting in shape."

Players can't afford to slack on their preparation for the season if they want to participate, especially in a sport such as soccer, where only 18 players out of 75 that tried out will play on the team. Wright knows how hard his players have worked in the off season to prepare for tryouts.

"These guys have been playing soccer their entire life, and want competition greater than that offered from intramurals," said Wright.

Beyond their enjoyment of the sport they participate in, almost all of these athletes may have been able to play their respective sport at smaller Division II or III colleges.

"Many players on our team could have played Division III or higher without a doubt. You have to have experience," said Ice Hockey player Tyler Shafer. Wright takes it one step further by declaring that his soccer team could "play .500 ball at the Division I level."

Turn to **SPORTS**, Page 12A



McNown takes Bruins to victory despite strong showing by Ducks

The Bruins look toward the Golden Bears after their close win against the Ducks last Saturday

By Rob Moseley
Oregon Daily Emerald

UCLA's showdown with Oregon last week was billed as a matchup of two of the nation's most potent offenses, and the Bruins certainly lived up to that billing.

The Bruins' 547 yards of total offense was the fourth-best total in the Pacific-10 Conference this season. The Bruins also have the third-best total, from their Sept. 12 win against Texas, while Oregon holds the top two spots, with the Ducks' 664 yards against Stanford being the highest total this season.

UCLA's Cade McNown also recorded the second-most passing yards in the conference this season with 395 against Oregon, and kicker Chris Sailer tied the conference best for field-goal attempts in a game.

In addition, receiver Danny Farmer had the third-best yardage total in the

Pac-10 with 161.

"We can pound guys on the ground, we can bomb them through the air," Bruin offensive guard Andy Meyers said. "I think you're just beginning to see how good this team is."

UCLA puts its 5-0 record on the line this weekend at California, which at 4-2 is the Pac-10's most surprising team in 1998.

Might Mencke for Birnbaum switch be only temporary?

After Washington State quarterback Steve Birnbaum threw for just 52 yards on 6-of-12 passing in one half of work in the Cougars' 51-29 blowout loss to Oregon on Oct. 10, head coach Mike Price said the substitution of Paul Mencke at halftime would carry over into the following week.

Mencke threw for just 99 yards on 11-of-20 passing in the second half, but scrambled for 26 yards and a

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touchdown and provided what Price termed a "needed" change.

Well, far be it from us to second guess the coach of the reigning Pac-10 champions, but Mencke is apparently no Ryan Leaf. Mencke set a new standard in the Pac-10 this season by throwing six interceptions in the Cougars' 42-14 loss to Southern California, the Ducks' opponent this week.

UCLA's McNown, Ayanbadejo honored after beating Ducks

McNown and linebacker Brendon Ayanbadejo have been named Pac-10 players of the week for their efforts in the Bruins' win.

As well as recording nearly 400 yards passing, McNown threw three touchdowns, two after vomiting at the

50-yard line after a 25-yard run in the third quarter.

Ayanbadejo sacked Akili Smith on consecutive plays in overtime to help push the Ducks out of field-goal range. In addition to the sacks, he had eight tackles, six unassisted.

Washington kicker and return-man Joe Jarzynka also earned player of the week honors on Monday.

Jarzynka set a Pac-10 single-game record for most yards on punt returns with 166 yards on seven returns. He ran one 91 yards for a touchdown, the longest punt return in the Pac-10 this year.

Jarzynka has been doubling as the Huskies' kicker for two weeks now, to the delight of the Dawgs' fans and coach.

"Joe is a free spirit," Washington head coach Jim Lambright said. "I like guys who are crazy out there, and score points for you too."