

SPORTS

Wednesday
April 21, 1999Best Bet
NBA Basketball
L.A. Lakers vs. Portland
7 p.m., TBS

Arriaga proves No. 6 is No. 1

As the No. 6 singles player, senior Miguel Arriaga has transformed from a skinny freshman into the men's tennis team's most consistent winner

By Mirjam Swanson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Four years ago it would have been hard to believe that the skinny freshman from Mexico would become one of the most successful tennis players in Oregon history.

Miguel Arriaga arrived in Eugene as the pride of Toluca. He was the best tennis player in a city where tennis is the second most-revered sport, following soccer.

But at a frail 127 pounds, Arriaga found himself in a situation at Oregon that easily could have overwhelmed him.

He had never lifted weights before joining the Ducks. He barely spoke English. He was strictly a serve-and-volley player in a conference dominated by power. And he found himself part of a program that was in the midst of major transition.

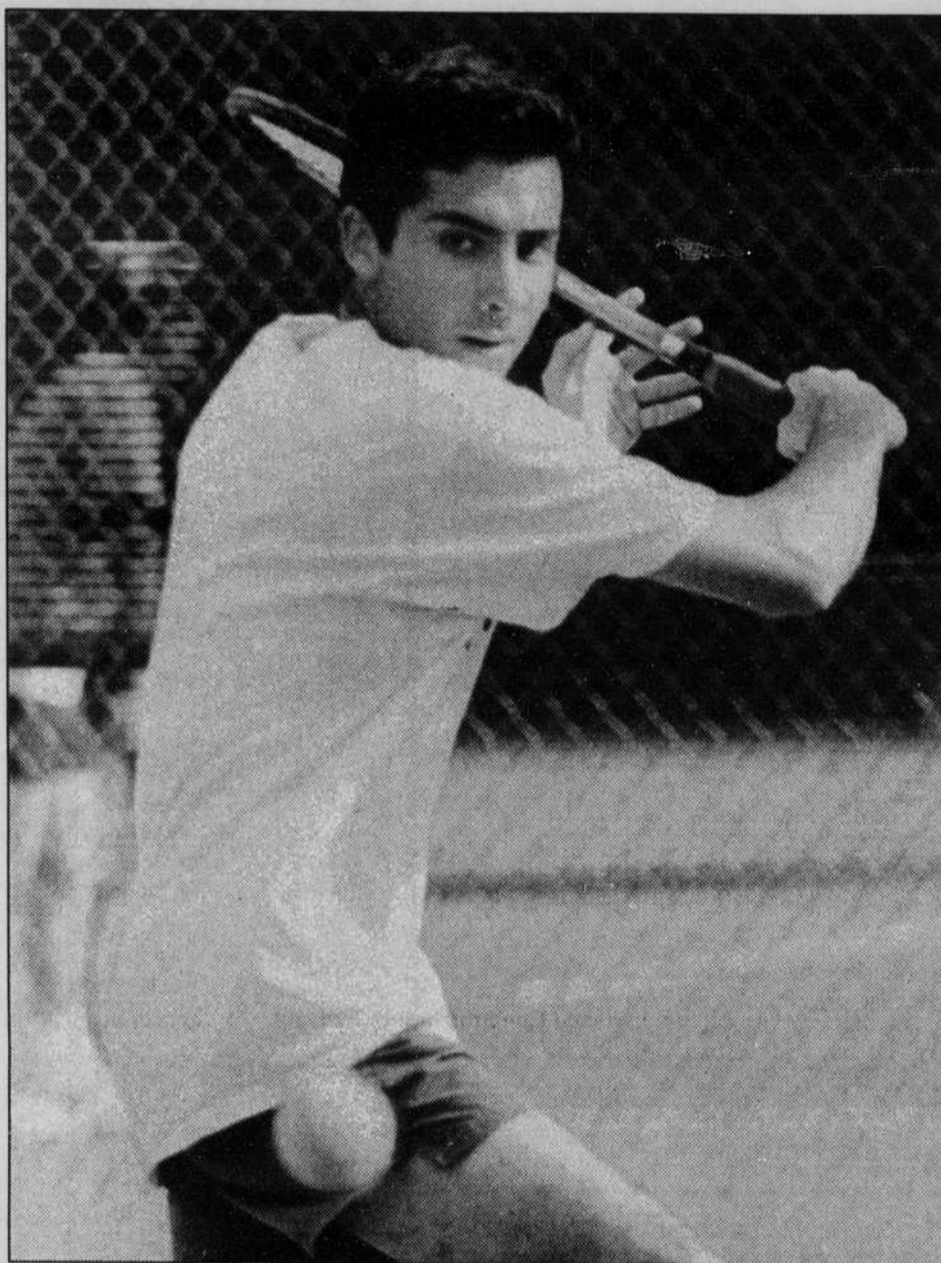
Arriaga's freshman season in 1995 was also the first for head coach Chris Russell, who was concocting a schedule unlike any that Oregon had ever seen. The Ducks were going to compete against the nation's best, taking on the Pacific-10 Conference powers they hadn't faced in the past.

With all that was going on, Arriaga needed unwavering focus if he wanted to make things work.

That wasn't a problem.

"He always has been very responsible and very goal-oriented," said Carlos Navarro, a teammate and fellow senior. "He knows what he wants, and he does it."

Arriaga wanted to end his career with the Ducks on a high note. He's heading into the Pac-10 Championships on Thursday with



"He's found a way to blend his craftiness and his acquired physical strength to be successful"

Chris Russell
UO head coach

Senior Miguel Arriaga of Toluca, Mexico, practices for the Pac-10 individual Championships.

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Scott Barnett/Emerald

Track and football fast friends

Men's Track Notes



Allison Ross

While Oregon football may be the top dog on campus, some members of the football team have never been shy about showing off their track skills.

The Oregon men's track team said farewell last season to legendary track coach Bill Dellinger, who led the Ducks to five NCAA titles and 17 conference titles. Five years ago, football head coach Mike Bellotti arrived at Oregon and quickly united with Dellinger to combine, in a sense, football and track.

As each coach went through the recruiting process, they would alert the other about athletes who were interested in participating in both sports. And it was a perfect collaboration — Oregon football players Pat Johnson, Ronnie Harris, LaMont Woods and Dino Philyaw are in Oregon's record books for their track performances.

Johnson holds Oregon's record in the 200 meters (20.39 seconds), ranks third in the 100 (10.26) and second in the 400 (45.48). Harris is 10th overall in the 100, eighth in the 400 and was part of a four-man crew in 1991 that ran the fastest 4x100 relay in 10 years.

This season, as the Oregon track program welcomed a new coach, Martin Smith, many

things were changing — but the alliance with Bellotti stayed the same.

"Before the season started, I got together with Martin to plan spring football around the big meets of the track season," Bellotti said. "I started doing this when I came to Oregon because I wanted to create a bridge between football and track."

Only two football players are currently participating in track — cornerback Jermaine Hanspard and offensive lineman John Bello.

Hanspard has run in two meets for Oregon. He finished sixth in the 100 at the Stanford Invitational on March 27-28 with a season-best time of 10.85. The following week at the Washington State dual meet in Pullman, Wash., Hanspard led Oregon in the 200 with his season-best time of 22.13.

Although many of the Oregon football players who compete in track are primarily runners, Bello is having a successful season as a thrower.

At the Mt. San Antonio College relays last week, Bello improved his personal record in the discus to 169 feet, 5 inches, a mark which also qualified him for the Pacific-10 Conference meet.

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Season shaped by the big three

In the week before the Ducks opened their outdoor season at the Oregon Preview on March 13, head coach Tom Heinonen called the upcoming event a stepping stone to the following week's Stanford Invitational.

Although he did not know it, Heinonen's statement would go on to summarize the first half of Oregon's season, which has been a stepping stone toward postseason events.

The recent Mt. San Antonio College Relays in Walnut, Calif., gave the Ducks' top three competitors a taste of multi-day competition, a key characteristic of the NCAA and Pacific-10 Conference meets.

Those three competitors — Marie Davis, Kaarin Knudson and Karina Elstrom — have captured multiple NCAA provisional marks and are bound for the NCAA Championships in Boise, Idaho, on June 2-5.

Oregon's next meet will be the Drake Relays this Friday and Saturday in Des Moines, Iowa.

Back down to Tracktown

The Ducks' best performances of the season could still be yet to come, as Oregon will close its regular season at

Hayward Field with a three-meet home stand.

Both the Oregon Preview and the Hayward Relays were high-energy track meets, and if the closing home meets follow the pattern, any one of them could set the stage for more NCAA provisional marks.

Look for Hilary Holly and Heidi Fisk to break the NCAA barriers in the upcoming meets. Neither Holly or Fisk have ever had an NCAA berth.

Holly set a new lifetime best at the Hayward Relays by jumping 19 feet, 6 inches. At the Mt. SAC Relays, Holly also ran a season-best 12.14 seconds in the 100 meters.

Fisk has not yet fully recovered from an ankle injury that occurred at Stanford earlier this season, but she has shown obvious signs of improvement. Fisk shattered the school record in the hammer Friday at the Pomona Invitational near Los Angeles, with a mark of 177-9.

The first of the final home meets of the season is the Oregon Invitational on May 1, the second meet is the Pepsi Team Invitational on May 8 and the final meet is the Oregon Twilight on May 15.

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Women's Track Notes



Scott Pesznecker