

Oregon Daily
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Sports

Best Bet
MLB Postseason
N.Y. Mets vs. Atlanta
5 p.m., NBC

Still expect a gold rush in January

**Brett Williams**

I have bad news for anti-San Francisco fans who are ready to throw up the red flag on the winningest team of the 1990s — the 49ers could easily strike gold again this season.

I spent my weekend at Candlestick Park — not 3Com Park — where I watched the 49ers play the Carolina Panthers on a beautiful 85-degree day in the Bay Area. It was my first trip to the stadium, where my childhood heroes such as Joe Montana and Roger Craig had proven their dominance every Sunday on television.

Montana and Craig have been done for some time, but one constant still remains. Jerry Rice, the best receiver to ever play the game of football, showed that he could still play with the best. One of football's greatest iron men, Rice beat All-Pro cornerback Eric Davis en route to a five-reception, 59-yard performance, including a touchdown in the waning minutes that gave the 49ers a chance to tie the game. The two-point conversion, however, failed.

True, these weren't the same 49ers I have been watching the last 16 years or even the team I saw last year. Injuries and free agency continue to rob the 49ers of their talent.

At quarterback, the 49ers clearly have a dilemma. Steve Young cannot continue to suffer concussions without facing serious ramifications later in life. Does this mean that Jeff Garcia — an ex-San Jose State quarterback whose only pro experience is in the Canadian Football League — is the 49ers' quarterback of the future?

For San Francisco's sake, I hope not. Although Garcia is seeing his first NFL experience as a starter, some of his play Sunday was inexcusable. His first-quarter misfire to Rice in the end zone — Rice probably could have caught the ball fair if it was anywhere near him — was the beginning of a long day in the red zone.

49ers general manager Bill Walsh must have been wincing watching Sunday's game, wondering what could have been. Two years ago, Walsh wanted the 49ers to draft Jake Plummer, now a starter for Arizona, instead of Jim Drunkenmiller in the late first round. Walsh was only a consultant at the time, and he was overruled by the front office. Since then, Drunkenmiller has been cut and is currently third string in Miami behind Dan Marino and former Washington Huskies flop Damon Huard.

But the 49ers have proven in the past that they can win when Young is injured. Quarterbacks such as Steve Bono, Elvis Grbac, Ty Detmer and Drunkenmiller have tallied wins in a 49ers uniform, and Garcia should be able to do the same for the time being. He is not, however, the 49ers' long-term answer at quarterback, and he has proven such thus far this season.

San Francisco has had trouble in the past with Carolina, which no matter how outmatched, has found ways to win against the 49ers, even at Candlestick.

Former 49ers and Oregon coach George Seifert knows San Francisco's system, one

Turn to **Williams**, Page 8AJunior-college transfer Bryan Bracey, a 6-7 forward, shows off some of the athleticism Saturday night that has Ernie Kent planning to use him both inside and outside. Jeffrey Stockton Emerald

Kent happy again with JC crew

■ A quartet of junior-college recruits has Ernie Kent hoping he found a few more marquee players

By **Tim Pyle**
Oregon Daily Emerald

During the spring of 1998, Ernie Kent scoured the junior-college ranks, ultimately landing three recruits.

By the end of last season, two of those transfers — point guard Darius Wright and forward Alex Scales — had firmly established themselves as indispensable

members of the Oregon men's basketball team.



Last spring, Kent was at it again.

The new crop of junior-college signees runs four strong, and Kent expects similarly bountiful production when the Ducks begin their season, which starts with a Nov. 12 exhibition game.

Although Oregon has been picked to finish fourth in the Pacific-10 Conference and secure only its second NCAA Tour-

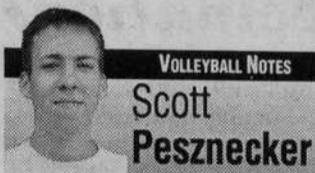
nament berth since 1961 in most preview publications, Kent said those prognosticators still did not take into account the impact that the newcomers will have.

"[The writers] are going on what the coaches are telling them in the conference, they're going on how strong we finished last year coming down the stretch," said Kent, in his third year as Ducks head coach.

"I don't think they're going so much on what's coming in the door at this program.

Turn to **Basketball**, Page 12A

UO hopes to cash in on Tobbagi's return



VOLLEYBALL NOTES

Scott Pesznecker

Something will be different when the Oregon volleyball team takes the court against Washington State on Friday in Pullman, Wash.

A familiar face will most likely return to the lineup, a teammate whose presence on the court has been missed by players and coaches alike.

Monique Tobbagi — the Ducks' best offensive weapon — is back.

"It's huge, she's our best player," Oregon head coach Cathy Nelson said. "It's going to hurt your team a lot when your best player is out, and obviously that's the case with us."

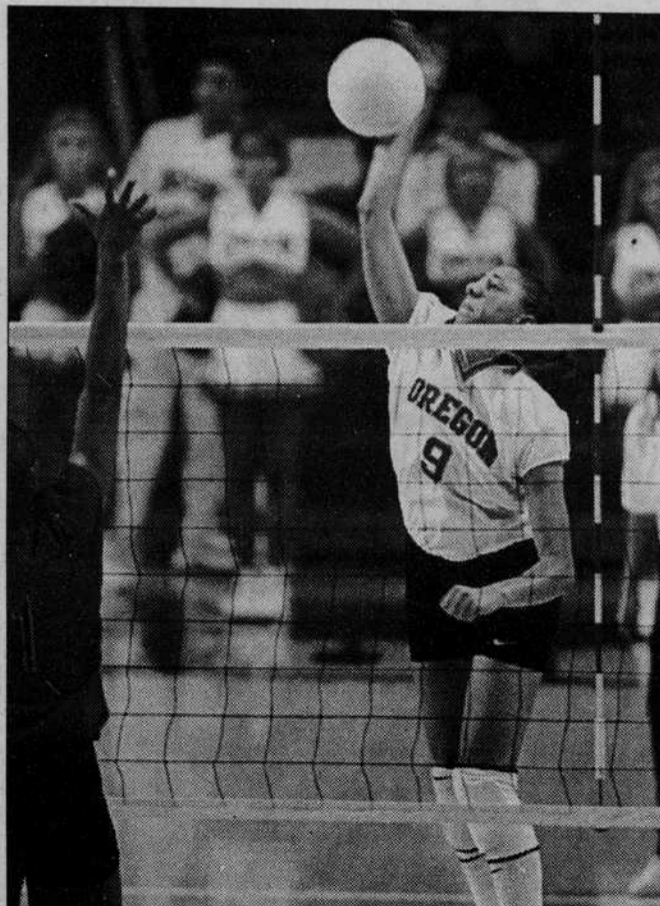
Before being sidelined with a leg injury, Tobbagi led the Ducks' offense, compiling 164 kills in 45 games.

But for the past couple of weeks, the sophomore has watched from the sideline as Oregon's offense sputtered. Juniors Amy Banducci and Halie Mazza provided much of the Ducks' explosiveness during Tobbagi's absence, and freshman Nicole Allen stepped up to play some big minutes as well.

But not one Duck can kill the ball like Tobbagi can. Had she been in the lineup, Oregon would probably not be winless in the Pacific-10 Conference.

While Tobbagi's return should give the Ducks a much-needed confidence boost, keep in mind that Tobbagi is not flawless. She has committed her share of errors this season, and her jump serve — which can be deadly when it barely skims over the net and bullets in the heart of the opposition — often gets called for net violations.

Nelson said that aside from her abilities on the court, the mental impact caused by Tob-

Oregon is anticipating the return of its offensive standout, Monique Tobbagi. Scott Barnett EmeraldTurn to **Volleyball**, Page 8A