

# Williams

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reason why he was able to lead his Panthers to victory. Seifert, who was forced out by 49ers management three seasons ago, remains one of the biggest class acts in the game and retained the winningest percentage by a head coach in NFL history with his victory Sunday.

After handing 49ers' head coach Steve Mariucci his first loss at Candlestick in more than two seasons, Seifert congratulated the coach and refused to gloat. Seifert

knows that his team barely slipped out of the Bay Area with a win, and the Panthers appeared vulnerable near the end of the game, when they should have put the 49ers away.

Up 31-16 in the fourth quarter, the Panthers had kept the 49ers' offense out of the end zone and were dominating on defense and special teams. But the 49ers' never-say-die attitude showed up once again, as it has down the stretch in other close games this season.

Knowing another Panther score would seal their fate, the 49ers intensified defensively and forced Carolina running back Tshimanga

Biakabutuka to fumble. Cornerback R.W. McQuarters recovered the loose ball and dashed for a 41-yard touchdown that cut the Panthers' lead to 31-23.

Garcia had one last chance, and he made the most of it. He led the 49ers to a touchdown with just more than one minute left, but the 49ers were unable to tie because of an errant pass on the two-point conversion.

OK, so I have to concede that the Panthers did play well and did deserve to win. Panther receivers continually abused San Francisco's shorter cornerbacks and, at times, made Steve Beurlein look like the second coming of Steve Young. But the 49ers killed themselves with the play of their special teams, and I know adjustments will be made by Mariucci.

The returns of Young, All-Pro receiver Terrell Owens and running back Garrison Hearst, holder of the 49ers' single-season rushing record, will help the cause tremendously. With Young at the helm, the 49ers are night and day compared to when Garcia is at the controls. Young has one of the best red-zone percentages in NFL history.

I must admit it was a tough game for me to swallow. I had come to see a classic 49ers' victory, but San Francisco was short-handed without the key players they needed to win. When the 49ers' guns return, however, I expect them to come out firing.

San Francisco's talent may be depleted, but it still has the skill and experience to play deep into January. And despite rarely losing, they know how to take a loss in stride.

When asked if it was the end of an era after Sunday's loss, San Francisco players remained confident.

"Nah, we just lost another game," cornerback Tim McDonald told The Oregonian. "We have to find a way to end our skid, but we will."

When all was said and done, it was a great day in the sun despite the 49ers' loss. And when a few key players return to the 49ers' lineup, I expect them to see the light once again.

*Brett Williams is a sports reporter for the Emerald. He can be reached via e-mail at [builliam@gladstone.uoregon.edu](mailto:builliam@gladstone.uoregon.edu).*

# Briefs Sports

## Giants defeat Cowboys

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Tiki Barber provided the New York Giants some revenge for Deion Sanders' heroics against them a year ago.

Barber returned a punt 85 yards for a touchdown, then took a short pass 56 yards to set up Brad Daluiso's 22-yard game-winning field goal with 1 second left and give the Giants a 13-10 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Monday night.

The game was 3-3 until Bar-

ber's punt return with 7:50 left in regulation to gave the Giants a 10-3 lead. But Emmitt Smith scored on a 2-yard run at the end of a 68-yard, seven-play drive to tie it 10-10.

That led to more heroics by Barber, who had 233 all-purpose yards in the game.

On a second-and-10 from their own 41, Kent Graham found Barber in the flat, and he eluded Dat Nguyen and raced to the Dallas 3, setting up Daluiso's game-winner.

*The Associated Press*

# Volleyball

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bagi's return is equally important to the team's near future.

"The team feels so much more confident with [Monique] out on the court because she can do so many things for us," Nelson said. "I think that will be a big spark."

Tobbagi's injury could not have happened at a worse time — but her return couldn't have been planned any better.

A long road ahead?

What happens if Tobbagi's return doesn't turn things around for Oregon?

Winning becomes easier with the help of momentum, and right now, the Ducks have none.

Washington State, Washington and California were all beatable opponents for Oregon, but the Ducks lost to all three teams.

The Ducks' loss to Portland on Oct. 5 — the Vikings were 0-12 at the time — best describes the rut they're in.

If the Ducks record a win on Tobbagi's comeback weekend, it's unfortunate that it has to be on the road. But if Oregon is going to win its first Pac-10 game and gain valuable momentum, then the Cougars or the Huskies would be great opponents to beat.

Washington State (3-6 Pac-10) should be the stronger of the two teams, as they are coming off of an emotional five-game win over Washington (2-7). The Huskies, on the other hand, have lost their

last five conference matches.

What team could possibly be better for Oregon to play right now?

Next weekend, the Ducks face California and Stanford at home.

The Golden Bears are beatable, but the Cardinal is nationally ranked and handed the Ducks a swift, three-game loss on Sept. 30. Oregon could be competitive with Stanford, but don't wait for an upset.

With five matches remaining this season, Oregon State comes to McArthur Court for Civil War part two — another potential win, especially if the Ducks can pick up a prior victory.

After the Beavers match awaits a tough road trip against UCLA and Southern California. Enough said.

The final two games could be interesting. On Sept. 18, the Ducks play Arizona State at home, followed by Arizona the following night.

Nelson attributes the start of Oregon's disappointing season to its three-game loss against Arizona State. If her team shares her feelings, the Sun Devils could be in for a shock.

The bottom line: no Oregon volleyball team in school history has ever gone an entire season without winning a Pac-10 game. Beating Washington State or Washington this weekend, with help from Tobbagi, would be the best way to keep that streak alive.



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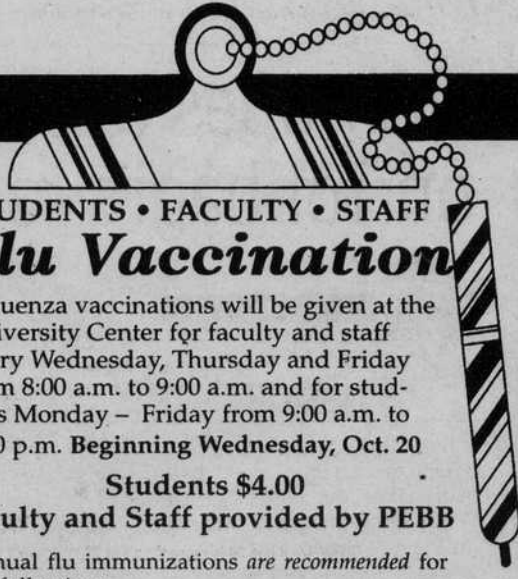
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