



Duck fans go crazy after Saturday's men's 17-point comeback win against Arizona. Ryan Starkweather Emerald

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**Pit Crew**

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This season, the rowdy fans are making a great Oregon team even better.

Following last weekend's 86-81 comeback win against the Wildcats, Oregon head coach Ernie Kent praised fans.

"Mac Court was superb, just outstanding," Kent said. "Definitely the Mac Court of old. The entire game, that crowd was just awesome. They gave us a nice energy boost to really pull this out and help us play tough defense down the stretch of this game."

"Once the momentum started to swing and come our way, with that crowd coming alive like it did, defensively we just stepped up to another level, and it really gave us an opportunity to win the game."

Kent has long been a supporter of Mac Court and the atmosphere there, an outlook that former Oregon head coach Jerry Green didn't understand. Green — who now coaches at Tennessee — continuously barked for a new facility, but was refused every time.

When Kent replaced Green in 1997, it was a breath of fresh air for Oregon fans. Kent played in front of wild Mac Court crowds during his playing days, and at his first press conference he made it clear what his stance was concerning the arena.

"My passion for McArthur Court goes back to an era that built traditions still talked about today," said Kent, who will have led Oregon to its sixth NCAA Tournament in school history this season.

"I have personally experienced the blood, sweat and tears that went into establishing the Pit as one of the toughest places to play in the country. We will always defend Mac Court with honor, passion, and intense defense."

To no one's surprise Kent had fliers given to students to sign up

to be part of "The Pit Crew" before this season's UCLA game. He was also responsible for the purchase of t-shirts and "fowl towels."

"Kent has been willing to do that because he believes we have the best home court advantage," said sports marketing intern Frank Jezukewicz, a member of "The 6th Man Club."

"He wants the crowds to be even better than when he was playing."

Oregon quarterback Joey Harrington is one die-hard member of "The Pit Crew". With the enthusiasm of people like Harrington, Mac Court is becoming as difficult a place to play as Autzen Stadium is for opposing football teams,

where the Ducks haven't lost a game since 1997.

For the Arizona game, Harrington and friends welcomed the return of forward A.D. Smith with face masks of their own.

"We're all big A.D. supporters, so we just put it together with laminating plastic and athletic tape," Harrington said.

A.D.'s reaction to the warm reception?

"It was as if I was a freshman getting out there for the first time," said Smith, who had eight points in his return from surgery. "The crowd was real good to me, it was a great college basketball atmosphere here tonight."

**Alex acknowledged**

For the first time in his career, Alex Scales received Pac-10 player of the week honors for his contributions against the Arizona schools last weekend.

The senior guard averaged 25.5 points, 4.5 rebounds and 2 assists, including a career-high 31 points on 11 of 19 shooting in the win against Arizona state.



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