

# PERSPECTIVES

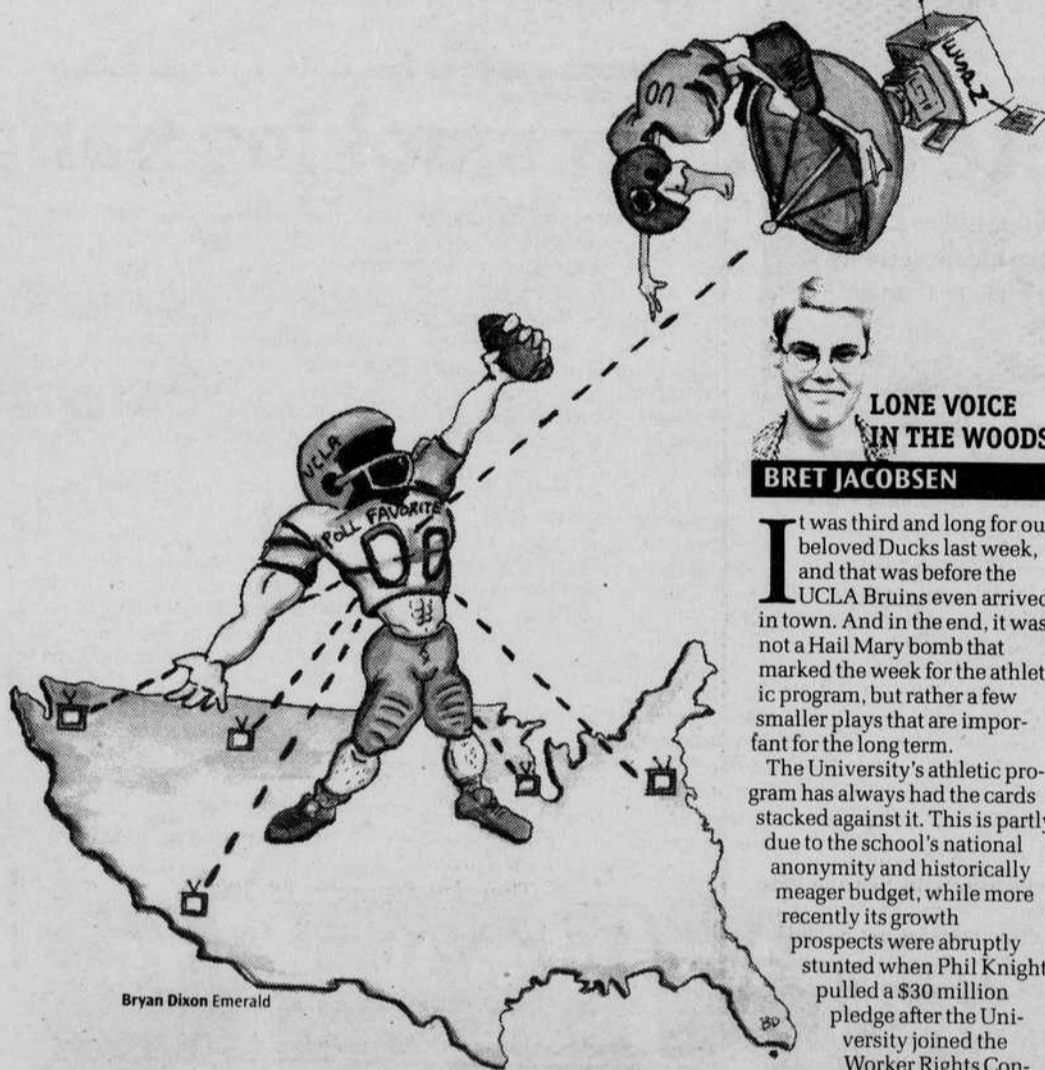
Tuesday

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## Athletics makes a bold play to keep the ball rolling



Bryan Dixon Emerald

### LONE VOICE IN THE WOODS BRET JACOBSEN

It was third and long for our beloved Ducks last week, and that was before the UCLA Bruins even arrived in town. And in the end, it was not a Hail Mary bomb that marked the week for the athletic program, but rather a few smaller plays that are important for the long term.

The University's athletic program has always had the cards stacked against it. This is partly due to the school's national anonymity and historically meager budget, while more recently its growth prospects were abruptly stunted when Phil Knight pulled a \$30 million pledge after the University joined the Worker Rights Consortium.

The first problem for the athletic program is that Eugene is a small school on the West Coast that receives more rain than Noah had to fight through on his wooden dinghy. It's hard to attract the top national talent necessary for a nationally competitive program when Duck teams receive inappropriately little media attention, and there are

larger schools with more tropical conditions.

But if the inclimate nature and isolated geography of the school weren't enough, the eruption over worker rights and the role of the University in ensuring its licensed products are made responsibly put a dent in plans to expand Autzen Stadium. Such an expansion would have improved funding for the athletic program and reduced its financial needs from the University's budget.

Those historical and political conditions, in a nutshell, caused the Ducks to fall behind and are why the beloved mallards needed a bold play.

And until last week, it looked as though the decision to join the WRC would be a costly fumble that would cripple the athletic program and turn the tide of national ascent.

But within one week, two seemingly unrelated events worked in concert to regain the momentum to improve.

First, ESPN's College GameDay television crew descended on Eugene to cover the Ducks and Bruins match. Granted, they wouldn't be here if the opponent weren't the Bruins. But the crew's arrival marked the first time the pre-eminent national sports network has hosted a show from the Northwest.

It is critical to any program striving for national acceptance to receive as much media attention as possible. Since polls still count for just about everything in college, and most reporters and coaches in-

involved in the polling process usually don't have the time or inclination to watch every game — especially West Coast games starting late — name recognition is immeasurably important.

That coup for national attention was followed by a hotly debated issue more closely related to the University's body politic. School President Dave Frohnmayer made the decision to join the Fair Labor Association, the first step to mending the important relationship with Knight.

Some may argue that a school shouldn't be so dependent on individual private donors, but the harsh truth is that for the athletic program to be a perennial contender for the Pacific-10 title, or possibly even loftier goals, there must be substantial investments in facilities. While it is the contention of some that such funds should come from the state and the notion of others that athletics ought not receive so much attention as it is, the reality is that the money isn't coming from the state and that it seems prominent athletic programs at least build the brand recognition of a school.

In the end, the appearance of ESPN will make a small contribution to the tough job of capturing national recognition and the FLA decision will in some small way begin to mend the tattered relationship with the University's most generous alumnus.

It wasn't a Hail Mary week for the athletic program. It was just enough to get the first down and keep the drive alive.

## This year, we'll convince ourselves politics is fun



### DIARY OF A MALCONTENT

MICHAEL J. KLECKNER

OK, studious types. Time to get back to work. Or play, or whatever it is you do to pass the time during classes.

I pass the time thinking about our world, and wondering. Politically, socially, culturally — add whatever other social science word you like. My world revolves around human interaction and questioning the way we form the misshapen weirdness we call reality.

I'm Mike Kleckner, the Perspectives editor this year, and this page of the Emerald is going to take you on a trip into the whacked-out world of politics and society. We will all come back intact — probably — but if we do our job right, everyone will sustain some singed hair and maybe a few scars. It's part of life, y'all.

Here's the brief bio sketch. You get no elaboration, but read my columns and you'll get context. I'm 28, a Taoist, an anarchist,

I'm queer, a pacifist, a vegetarian and a malcontent who grew up in a Volkswagen van as a moderately conservative, hard-left liberal. Go figure.

So, my pitch is for politics. This page will cover as much of campus life as we can manage to get pissed off about. But my shtick is the sometimes cesspool of corruption we call the modern-day political system.

Politics is fun! Sure, it's a game, and the rich tend to dominate, but it isn't boring or a waste of time. Politics is about people deciding how to get along. The formal version of which we call society, but those rules are really practiced much more informally between people.

On a personal basis, we decide what's right and what's wrong. Don't try this at home, but say we yell at some jerk in a car who doesn't know how to drive. That's a political decision. In such an outburst, we've determined how much distress we have to take and how close that driver was to interfering with someone else's direct experience. That's politics. The suits in Washington just codify their outbursts in law.

When we all interact in the codifying-law-type stuff, we have a say in society. We get to decide what's equitable and how to go about providing that equity to the masses. We get to decide how much is acceptable to take

from another person (or how much is required for free expression), what sort of rights exist and the basis for deciding and enforcing those rights. Thinking about those basic ideas of how people should live together is a lot of fun. No, really.

OK, maybe I overstate my case. Maybe some people don't think that sort of intellectual endeavor is fun. Maybe it's just people like me, who end up with jobs like this.

But this whole process is freedom, y'all. It's what we're all so stinkin' proud about in this country. We have the power, the right and the duty to examine society's structure and to decide ways to change it and make it more like the picture of utopia we hold in our head when we bitch about how crappy this world is.

Perhaps the Emerald's opinion page won't turn you all into political junkies. However, we — the editorial board and columnists — will try to explain the theories on society that underlie all the current political nonsense to which we're subjected. We will try to make sense of the spin and the propaganda (we'll try — we're not geniuses here). And we'll try to cut through the slime in an entertaining way, so that maybe together we can talk about what kind of world it is we want.

Because that's what politics in America does. It decides how we live.

So read Perspectives. And join the conversation. We will try not to preach at you from our lofty tower of righteousness, the way many newspapers do, telling you the "right answers to the world's most pressing problems" (even though we do peer down at campus life from some lofty offices in the EMU).

We'll have opinions, sure. Bet on it. But if we can explain to you the process of acquiring that opinion, then you can share your opinion and we can build our world together.

Make sure to tell us where the writers or the paper has gone wrong and why. Use e-mail or post a message on the Emerald's Web site after you're done reading. Call me at the office. Write a letter to the editor. Talk to me about a guest column. And be assured, I will respond.

There are other treats in store. You'll get to know about them soon enough.

Make sure you read, think and interact. It's the only way our world will work.

We need you. We need all of us, together. Because soon we, the college student population, will be in power, and we better get ready.

The Perspectives page will try to help us all along the path. And yeah, I know it's politics, but it will be fun. I promise.