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Civil War

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crossing the line." One of fifth-ranked Oregon's goals in the beginning of the year was to have a 10-win season for the first time. Back in the spring, players were seen wearing T-shirts bearing the words, "6 in 96, 7 in 97, 8 in 98 and 9 in 99. Finish the Job!" As the Ducks' win total increased by one in each corresponding season, the hope for the ensuing fall got higher and higher.

Who would have thought that

“I want that ring so in 40 years I can look back and tell my kids about it.

Joey Harrington
 Oregon quarterback

Oregon's first-ever 10th win could come against its in-state rivals for the Pac-10 Championship?

"It's about time to get that number 10," junior cornerback Rashad Bauman said. "It's gone up one every year, so I don't see why it shouldn't this year too."

On the flip-side, No. 8 Oregon State is also looking for its first season with double-digit wins. This is only the third time in history it has ever recorded nine wins.

"Our players have been very resilient through the year," Oregon State head coach Dennis Erickson said. "We're gaining confidence as time went on during the year. But to think we'd be 9-1 at this time?"

One person who forecasted a showdown of this magnitude was Oregon senior defensive end Jason Nikolao. Back on Oct. 10, as Oregon prepared to play USC after its bye week, Nikolao talked about the Beavers and the Civil War game—39 days before it would even take place.

"I've been watching them all year and I can't wait to go up there and play them," said Nikolao a few days after Oregon State narrowly lost to Washington for its only defeat. "Last year was great to beat them here, but I want to win on that field in Corvallis so bad. I mean, they have the potential to win all of the rest of their

games, and I think we're going to win the rest of ours.

"That's going to be a big game. Nov. 18th, man. It's on my calendar."

Sure enough, each team won its next five games, setting up Saturday's showdown, which will be regionally telecast by ABC. Harrington will be matched against Beavers quarterback Jonathan Smith, while Oregon tailback Maurice Morris will be billed against Oregon State tailback Ken Simonton. The four will obviously play the most important roles, but Harrington believes the true key will be which team controls its emotion.

"It's going to be a very emotional game, and whether that translates into a lot of mistakes or a high-scoring game, I have no idea what to expect," he said.

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti showed off his 1995 Rose Bowl ring—which he received when he was Oregon's offensive coordinator—to his players this week to show them first-hand what they are playing for Saturday.

"I want one," said Harrington, whose team is already no worse than co-Pac-10 champs. "That's what I came here for. I don't like sharing. I want that ring so in 40 years I can look back and tell my kids about it."

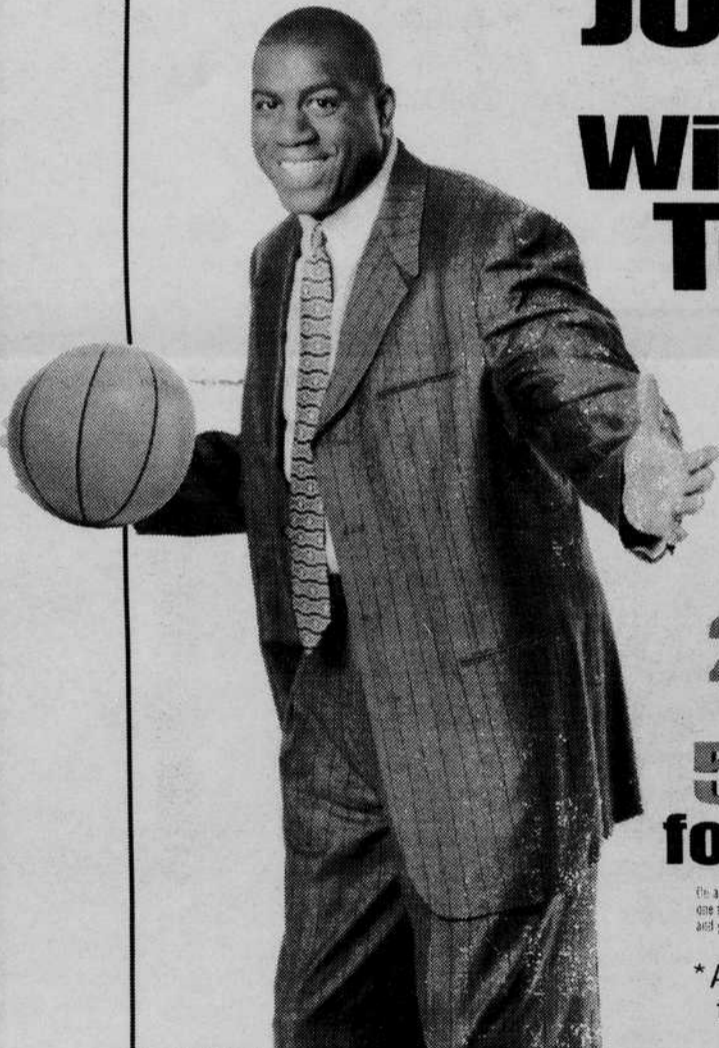
The junior quarterback—who has thrown for 20 touchdowns compared to eight interceptions—knows that the memory of this game will live in his mind forever.

"It's something that I will either cherish for the rest of my life, or it will haunt me," he said.

Both teams will be looking to cap off truly incredible seasons with a win and a prestigious bowl berth, and both know that somebody is going to walk out of the stadium as a loser. The teams have practiced behind closed doors all week and dissected one another's videotapes to no end, while their two respective cities have been off the hook in anticipation.

Now, all that's left is to just play the game and let the cards fall where they may.

"The talking is done," senior linebacker Michael Callier said. "There's no more time for talking."



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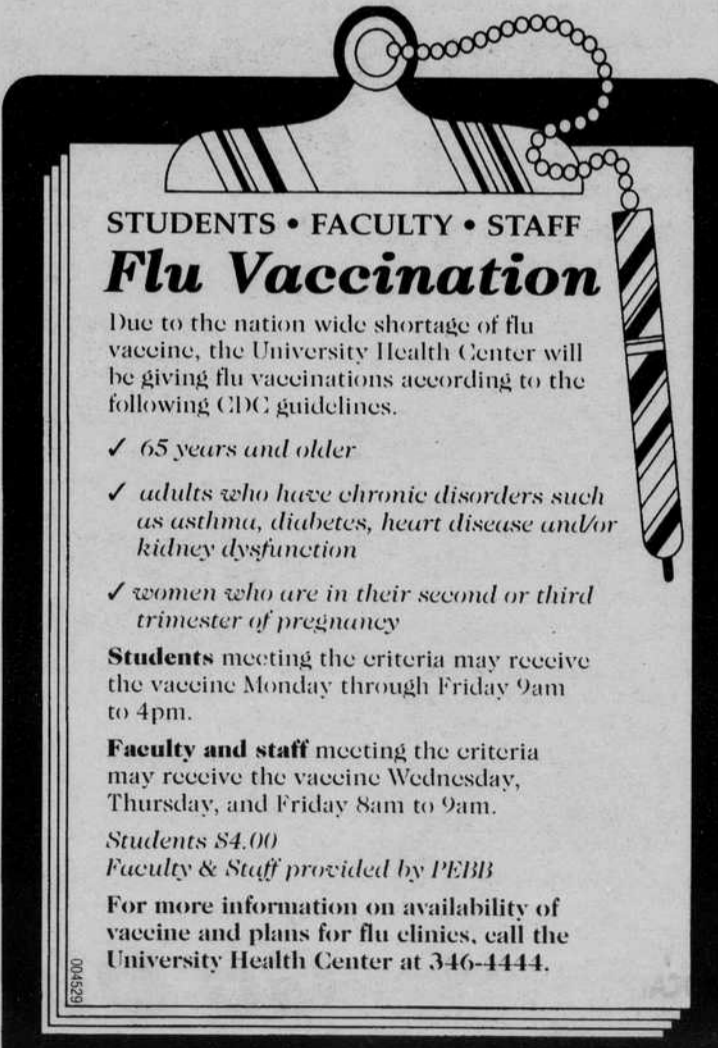
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