



Ducks get bigger with spring class

■ The Ducks sign three big men to help plug the holes of those that have left

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

Ernie Kent announced his spring signees Thursday, and it was as if he went through the drive-thru of a fast-food joint, ordered just what he wanted and made sure to Super-Size his meal.

Because the obvious theme for the 2001 recruiting class is height, and lots of it.



The Oregon men's basketball team added three big bodies to its family in 6-foot-11 Ian Crosswhite, 6-10 Brian Helquist and 6-8 Robert Johnson. Those three join 6-11 Matt Short, who signed his letter of intent with the Ducks last fall.

"Our concerns were losing three big men in Julius Hicks, Bryan Bracey and Flo Hartenstein," coach Kent said as he spoke to a group of reporters at the Casanova Center. "We knew we were going to have to replenish those positions with some size."

Crosswhite is a 225-pound forward from Killarney Heights High in Castlegrag, Australia, who joins Short as the two incoming freshmen. Helquist and Johnson, however, are entering the Oregon program after two years in junior college ball and will be expected to make an immediate impact.



Kent was eager to talk about the recruit he traveled Down Under for. The Australian Crosswhite is currently a member of his country's Junior National Team and was a part of the Western Australian U-20 team that competed in the national championship in February.

"He is one of the top 5 big man prospects in all of Australia," said Kent, who actually played against Crosswhite's father, Perry, at McArthur Court in a foreign exhibition game in 1975. "He is a skilled big man, skilled enough to play on the perimeter offensively."

Helquist is coming into Eugene from Florida Community College-Jacksonville, where he averaged 14.7 points and 8.8 rebounds per game. The 6-10, 260-pound center, who will be a junior, began his career at Louisiana State before transferring to FCC-J.

"He has a great mentality for the game," Kent said. "A big, wide body. He is a low post, back-to-the-basket scorer that loves to bang and plays physical."

While Helquist will help man the low post, Johnson will provide some of the versatility that the Ducks lost with Bracey's graduation. In fact, Kent describes Johnson as a mix between Bracey and former Duck A.D. Smith, who graduated following the 1999-2000 season.

"He has the ability to pass it and is a ferocious rebounder, loves to go get the basketball," Kent said. "He has that Dennis Rodman mentality."

Johnson, a 220-pound forward from Sebastopol, Calif., was named to the all-state and all-Bay Valley Conference first teams last season after leading Santa Rosa Junior College to a school-record 29 wins thanks to his 12 points and 14 rebounds per game.

Now, with these additions, Oregon will have seven big men, including 7-2 soon-to-be senior Chris Christofersen, who will be attending Pete Newell's renowned big man camp this summer.

"Time will tell how successful this recruiting class is," Kent said. "They'll fit in really well in terms of the growth and development of getting us to where we need to be."

Home run QUEEN

Senior Triawn Custer is putting up some impressive offensive numbers — just ask the recordkeepers

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

Imagine if Mark McGwire never played Major League Baseball. The world would be void of a spectacular 70-home-run season in 1998.

Now imagine if Triawn Custer had never set foot onto Howe Field, the home of the Oregon softball team, for her first collegiate game in that same year.

The Eugene community would be void of an amazing four-year career that has produced a school-record 34 homers ... and counting.

Custer, who pronounces her first name TREE-awn, never expected to play Division-I softball.

Fate, however, had different plans. "I hadn't realized [my potential]," Custer said. "No one ever talked to me about playing in college. We hadn't explored that option in high school."

"I was playing fall ball when [Oregon head coach Rick Gamez] approached me. I hadn't talked to anyone else or sent out any letters or anything. I just happened to be at the right place at the right time."

That fall day during Custer's junior year of high school kept two of the biggest parts of her life together: softball and family.

Living just 60 miles north of Eugene, Custer's parents in Salem are able to catch the Ducks' home games and cheer on their favorite player.

"I knew I couldn't go out of state because my family is too important," Custer said. "My parents enjoy watching me play, and that keeps me motivated."

At age eight, after two years of T-ball, Custer began her softball career. Fourteen years later, she's in the record books as

ON TAP

Who: Oregon vs. San Jose State & Oregon State

When: 2 & 4 p.m. Friday (SJS), 12 & 2 p.m. Saturday (OSU)

Where: Howe Field



Sluggo Triawn Custer broke Oregon's career home runs record last weekend.

Emerald

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Track teams to duel with Huskies

■ The Ducks are excited to face off with their oldest rival on their home turf

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon women's track rivalry with Washington, which will continue Saturday on Hayward Field at the Washington Dual Meet, is more than just a Northwest scrimmage. Even the word "rivalry" doesn't do it justice.

It's history. Every year since 1977, the Ducks and Huskies have faced off in a bitter, and often very close, dual meet. For many of the athletes involved, the meet marks the only time they will compete directly against another team all year.

"It's our oldest rivalry," Oregon head coach Tom Heinonen said.

Literally. That Oregon-Washington dual meet in 1977 was the first in Oregon women's track history, and it also marked the first co-ed meet.

The Ducks on this year's track team may remember only the recent history of the meet, which has been good and bad. Last year, Oregon edged Washington 80-74 at Hayward Field. In 1999, the Ducks took on both the Huskies and the Cornhuskers of Nebraska and finished third. In 1998, Washington crushed Oregon in Seattle, 85.5-68.5.

If this year's meet were scored purely on best times from this season, the Ducks would win by four points. But of course the meet isn't about season records before Saturday. It's about scoring personal records on Saturday.

"What we need to understand is that everybody has to

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■ Expect a tight race between Oregon and Washington in the 117th annual dual meet Saturday

By Robbie McCallum
Oregon Daily Emerald

The last vestige of the olden days of Oregon track and field is upon us.

It's the lone hold-over from the time when Hayward Field was yellow, college football was played in the middle of the oval and all the meets were against one team.

This Saturday, the Ducks host the 117th installment of the annual Oregon-Washington Dual Meet.

"This is an excellent opportunity to get to the basic level of competition: being a racer and competitor," Oregon head coach Martin Smith said. "It's a one-on-one, team-oriented competition, very different from the larger meets and invitationals."

Oregon leads the overall series 85-32, but the Huskies have won the past three meets, including a close 85-78 win last season at Hayward Field.

"We don't just want to get the win, we want to crush them," said junior Ross Krempley, who won a photo-finish 800-meter run at last year's dual. "They beat us last year, but we're fired up this year. I like these dual meets, especially at home. The crowd gets excited. Everyone on the team gets involved. They're great."

Hayward Field fans should expect an exciting meet in every event. In a prospective dual meet taking the top times from each team in each event, Washington narrowly wins 82-81, propelled by the top time in the 4x400-meter relay.

"We've placed people to maximize point output," Smith

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