

SPORTS

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Best Bet
NFL: Philadelphia at Kansas City
5:30 p.m., ESPN



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Poking some fun at our neighbors

Back in January, it was announced that our beloved Ducks and the hated Beavers would be taking the field at Autzen Stadium two weeks after the game was originally scheduled to be played. Producers at ABC felt the game would be important enough to show nationally, and well, so did everyone else at the time.

Eleven months later, Oregon State is 5-5 and Oregon, at 9-1, has already locked up a Fiesta Bowl bid, and is still in the running for the Rose Bowl. Doesn't look like such a good decision for ABC anymore, does it?

You know what? Who cares?

Saturday will mark the 105th time the two teams will take the field together, making this the longest-running rivalry on the West Coast. Even though the Ducks and Beavers played more like high school squads, talent-wise, for much of that time, it would be hard to find a game with more bloodshed.

For those who are new to the game, new to the Oregon area, or just haven't figured it out yet, there are some defining

ways to tell a Duck fan from a Beaver fan. I'm from California and have only been here for little more than a year, but the signs are pretty obvious.

For example, if you're a Beaver, those keggers you attend every Saturday night probably represent the cultural high point of your collegiate career. Oh, sorry, that wasn't just the OSU players I was talking about.

Two days are left to tick away before the men in green and yellow take the field against the Halloween boys. I thought orange and black went out of style after Oct. 31.

OSU players are going to wish they were only wearing masks and makeup after our Ducks are done with them. Last year should be all the encouragement Oregon fans need after seeing the dead ducks lying on the Reser Stadium turf after the 23-13 debacle. Despicable is the only way to describe that scene, and to see it on television, well, that made it a lot worse.

Revenge is such sweet sorrow. Too bad most Oregon fans won't be able to see it, because we'll be laughing on the way to Tempe, Ariz. Oregon State made it there last season, but it was a fluke. Our Ducks haven't had a losing season since 1993, and it doesn't look like they'll return to athletic purgatory for years to come.

Oh yeah, come to think about it, shouldn't Sports Illustrated be a little embarrassed for picking the Beavers to win it all as well? At least they got it right by putting Joey Harrington on the cover with Oregon State's mighty mite, Ken Simonton.

What has happened to Simonton? In my opinion, he probably realized what color uniform he was really wearing. He probably also realized the two running backs down in Eugene were better than him any day of the week, which would have been enough to give him a bout of depression. "Well, we might as well just give in now because all we have from last year is short-stuff, Jonathan Smith, who can barely see above our offensive line," he's probably been thinking.

But Simonton has done the Ducks a favor. By playing so poorly this year, the votes that would have gone to him from Oregon writers for the Heisman Trophy will now go to Harrington. Joey, a little suggestion: Send Kenny a Christmas card. He did you one heck of a favor.

Emerald sports reporter Hank Hager has yet to learn the meaning of objectivity. He can be reached at hankhager@dailymerald.com. His opinions do not represent those of the Emerald.

UO filled with Civil War fever

■ The Ducks are eager to face the Beavers, and those sentiments are echoed by fans around town

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

Unmistakable college football noise blared from inside the Moshofsky Center on Wednesday afternoon as the Oregon Marching Band practiced its routine.

As it did, members of the color guard moved in rhythm with the sound, waving

yellow and red flags in synchronized motions.

And over in the Duck Shop near Autzen Stadium, sales were brisk with Oregon fans buying plenty of Civil War items to gear up for the big game.

"Our little 'Beat the Beavers' face tattoos have been really popular this week," said Christy Cameron, a shop supervisor. "People have been really pumped up, and everyone's been in a great mood. We started with a really busy day after Thanksgiving, and it's just been picking up steam from there."

"We can't wait for Game Day," she said.

That was also the theme for the Oregon football team Wednesday as Civil War week reached its midway point. The waiting began Nov. 11, the day after the Ducks beat UCLA, and the anxiety to suit up and battle the Beavers has about reached its limit.

"Every morning I wake up and I'm like, 'Damn, I'm one day closer,'" cornerback Steve Smith said. "So let's see, there's Thursday, Friday and then Saturday. We

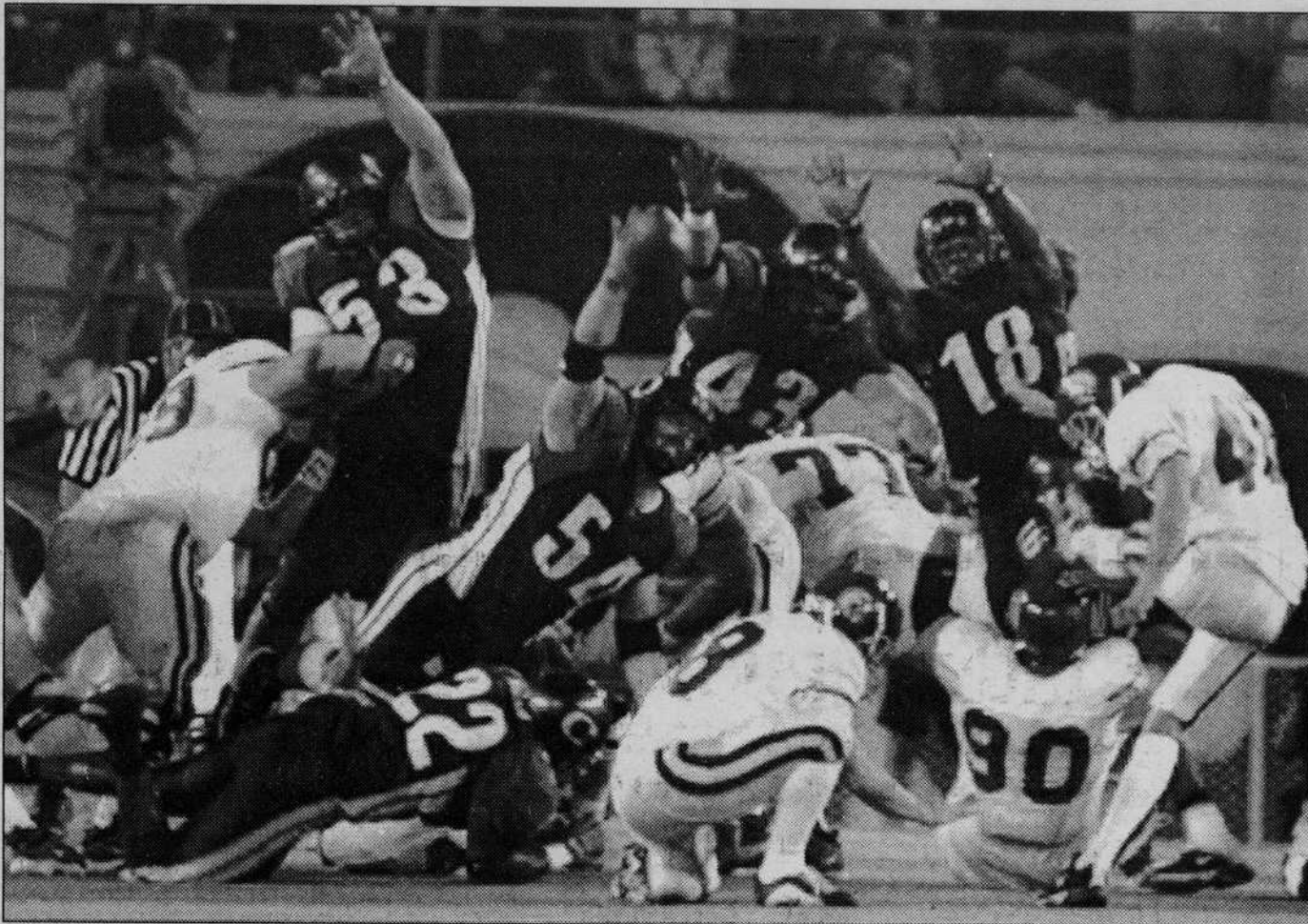
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Hank

Hager

Behind the Dish



Adam Amato Emerald

Senior defensive tackle Zach Freiter (54) stretches out for a blocked field goal attempt in Oregon's 24-22 win over Southern California on Sept. 22

Modest Mouse, INTENSE BEAST

■ Senior defensive tackle Zack Freiter doesn't war with words — he'll let his play do the talking on the field Saturday

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

Zack Freiter doesn't buy into all of the hype.

"There's no difference (this week)," the senior defensive tackle said of the Civil War. "It's another game, and we have to prepare like any other week to get a win if we can."

But it's Civil War week. Feed the insanity. Say you hate the Beavers, Zack. You know you want to. Teammate Steve Smith is over there telling reporters that there's no way Ken Simonton will get his 113 yards Saturday. He's mashing on the Beavs.

Zack, you're too nice. Are you really a football player?

"You just want to go out and play your best, that's all that really matters," said the 6-foot-3, 280 pound Freiter.

Freiter said he didn't have any allegiances with the Ducks or Beavers growing up.

"I wasn't a big fan of football when I was young. I liked baseball," he said. "I

never really followed it until I got here. But it's a lot of fun. The game's always sold out."

Fun? That's not what the fans want to hear.

Freiter is simply a soft-spoken and humble giant away from the field. But on the field, Freiter should almost be outlawed.

"In my opinion, he's the best defensive player on the line," freshman defensive end Igor Olshansky said. "If you know what you're talking about in football, and about the lines and about a D-lineman getting cut off or double teamed and staying in his gaps, Zack's one of the best I've ever seen."

He's the strongest, too. In the weight room, Freiter, the lone senior on the defensive line, can squat 631 pounds, the most of any defensive lineman in program history.

"He's a great player," junior defensive end Seth McEwen said. "Just his work ethic and how hard he's worked over the offseason to get ready, and how he works to get better every game is what has led to his success."

Freiter has recorded 21 tackles, including three for a loss, this season for

the No. 4 Ducks. More than statistics, though, Freiter's leadership on the field has been key to Oregon's effective run defense, ranked third in the Pacific-10 Conference.

After suffering numerous injuries throughout his career, the main obstacle this season was to stay healthy, Freiter said. And he has done that.

"It's a lot of work in the offseason," Freiter said. "Having the trainers work with me and keeping me healthy, you know, they're the ones who keep me healthy. And a little bit of luck. Things can go wrong sometimes, but fortunately, it's been a good year. I've had a lot of fun."

Staying injury free has enabled Freiter to show "everybody how good of a player he is," McEwen said.

Playing in his last game at Autzen Stadium on Saturday, Freiter admitted that he'll be "a little sad after the game. I still remember the first time I walked out of the tunnel, and I'll probably always remember my last game, too."

Just don't expect him to talk trash about it.

Emerald sports editor Adam Jude can be reached at adamjude@dailymerald.com.