

Hager

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single-A baseball at all parts of the country, stuck in some places like the middle of Iowa in July. It's akin to Freddie Jones jumping to the next level, playing in Medford, only to finally see the pros three years later.

I don't care if I ever get back...

That said, there are things that need to be changed in the college game.

- First, change the "ping" of the bat to the "crack" of the bat. Aluminum bats just take away from the feel of the game. The pros have got it right when they use wood, especially when games like the 21-14 championship win by USC a few years ago are more frequent than 5-4 scores.

The metal bats do have a little significance because they are much different, giving the sense of the exclusive college feel. There's just not enough exclusivity there to make metal worthwhile.

- The college level needs to market the game and its players with the same vigor as football. While there are no Joey Harringtons and David Carrs in baseball, there are players like Greene and Stanford's Jeremy Guthrie who have quality futures in pro ball.

Why not get these guys some ad time and get the college game out there. The first step, though, would be to increase the game's involvement with ESPN.

Currently, only the College World Series is televised by the media giant. Why not, instead of just televising the final round, get ESPN to show the finals of the Super Region-

als and Regionals before the final eight converge on the small Nebraska city? There might not be much airtime during the week for games that most of the country doesn't care about, but even tape-delay would get the job done.

Besides, there might be some people out there casually flipping through the channels disgusted with the pro game. They might settle on ESPN or ESPN2, watch these games, and realize how enjoyable baseball can still be.

- Create a collegiate all-star game. Football has it with the Blue-Gray game, and some games in collegiate basketball have the same feel.

But with most of the nation's best in baseball spread across the country, choosing the best 60 or so would bring them together, allow them to get acquainted with one another, and ultimately allow them to show off their immense talent.

During the weeklong College World Series, the Friday before the Saturday championship game always seems to be an off-day. Why not bring the 60 best from schools that didn't make the World Series and have them play an all-star game during prime time on TV that night. ESPN usually doesn't air much during the summer that's not related to the pro game, so this could be a rating's booster.

However, despite some of its shortcomings, the game is still a viable solution to June doldrums when basketball and hockey have just ended their seasons, and pro baseball is still embroiled in its many, many problems.

Just take me out to Omaha.

E-mail sports reporter Hank Hager at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

Track

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Santiago Lorenzo in the decathlon," Smith said. "Then you add some good recruits, and the development of the athletes that are returning, we're obviously very excited about the journey of next year."

With Stiegeler and Lorenzo coming back in 2003, next year's Duck squad won't lack for talent. Three of the five Oregon Pac-10 champions will be back. Two of the four Ducks who finished second at the Pac-10 meet will be back. Smith's recruiting class is perhaps the best since his class of 2001, which was ranked No. 1 nationally by Track and Field News.

With the addition of those recruits and the maturation of young stars like sophomore-to-be Eric Logsdon — who ran the fastest 5,000 time for an Oregon freshman since 1981, and did it with only one shoe — and junior-to-be Nick Bakke, who came out of nowhere to win the Pac-10 javelin title, the Ducks' youth movement is obviously under way.

"To be successful in the Pac-10, it's going to require (championship) type of efforts not only by those young men but also by other young men," Smith said.

Those young men will replace the old men who leave the team this year. Among the graduating seniors are Harris, Kimata, Pac-10 decathlon champion Billy Pappas, Pac-10 high-jump champion Kyley Johnson and former Pac-10 high-jump champion Jason Boness.

Harris is the only one of those athletes who will extend his season, to the USA Championships in Palo



Courtesy Washington State Media Services

Javelin thrower Nick Bakke will look to defend his Pac-10 title next season.

Alto, Calif., later this month. Hartmann may join him on the Stanford track; the sophomore distance runner is currently a "B" qualifier.

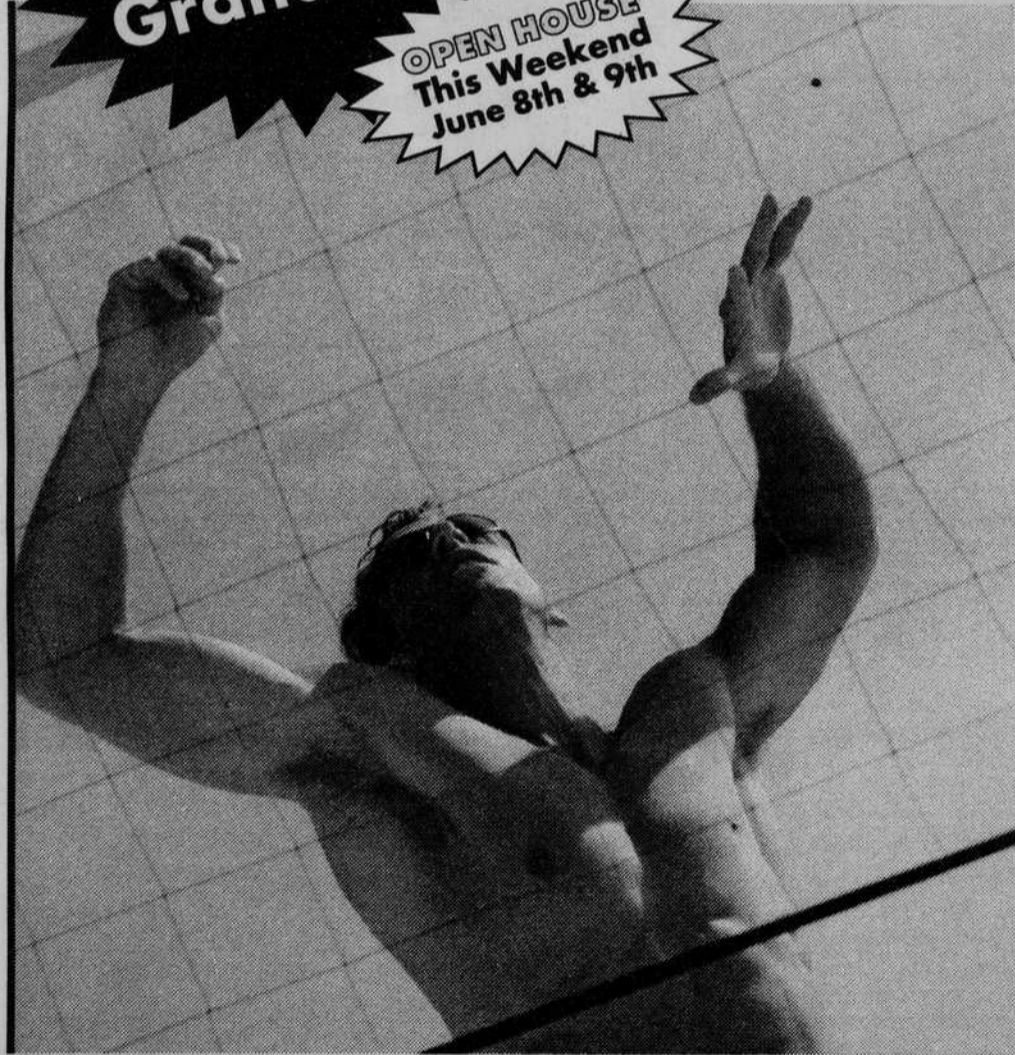
For Smith and the rest of the Ducks, 2001 and 2002 were just

the initial yawns of a sleeping giant. The wake up call, they hope, will come in 2003.

E-mail sports reporter Peter Hockaday at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com.

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