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# Memories of chips and sweaty palms

■ The sports staff reflects on the 'Year of the Duck' by picking out their favorite events this year

**Adam Jude, sports editor:** Please, no more Tostitos. No more chips and salsa, period.

The free nacho cheese so coated my stomach that I was in detox for about two weeks after the Fiesta Bowl on New Year's Day in Tempe, Ariz. "Tostitos" was everywhere — those colorful pastel signs, plastered here and there and everywhere. Walk into Sun Devil Stadium... wait, are they really going to play a game here? It's a carnival — one that makes you sick. Try to sleep, the Tostitos taste inhibits your breathing. Go to the bathroom, Tostitos is there. Tostitos, Tostitos, Tostitos. What does that mean, anyway?

But how can one resist? They're everywhere (we established that, right?). But they were free. Free. I must have them. Eat me, they say. I am free, eat me. Aaaah. Relapse. Sorry. Focus.

Ah yes, the game: Joey Harrington is perfect, blah, blah, blah, Maurice Morris makes a great run, blah, blah, blah, Joey Harrington still perfect, blah, blah, blah, Oregon defense stuffs Colorado run game, blah, blah, blah... buy the highlight tape.

Oregon, of course, wins, 38-16. Good game. Oregon, ranked No. 2, is hoping to get a share of the national title if Nebraska, which many believe shouldn't be in the Rose Bowl, beats Miami.

Two days later, Miami wins. Oregon's hopes for a national title were, well, no more. It was fun while it lasted.

**Jeff Smith, assistant sports editor:** The best part about working for the Emerald sports staff is being able to be the eyes and ears of our readers while covering the Ducks on the road. To pick one event as my favorite from this past year of covering the Pac-10 champion football and men's basketball team is practically impossible.

It was unreal to sit courtside at Maples Pavilion in Stanford, Calif., and watch the Ducks and the Cardinal go at it in an intense overtime showdown that Stanford eventually pulled out. It was obviously a thrill to cover the Fiesta Bowl and the NCAA Tournament.

But for me, there was nothing like being at the Rose Bowl in November for the Oregon-UCLA football game. Regardless of the final score, it was the electricity of walking up to the stadium and inside the turnstiles and overlooking the historic building from my view atop the vast press box.

And then, in the final minutes, walking down the stairs and stepping onto the sidelines gave me the chills. I'll never forget looking around at the thousands in attendance and at the faces of the Oregon sideline and absorbing the emotion all around me. The unmatched passion of collegiate athletics was on full display as UCLA kicker Chris Griffith missed a last-second 50-yard field goal to give the Ducks the 21-20 victory, sending the Ducks storming on the field with helmets raised and voices loud.

The history of the Rose Bowl itself is incredible, and while it would have been an awesome experience to cover a game there on New Year's Day, I'll never forget that November afternoon.

**Chris Cabot, sports reporter:** There may have been more exciting games or those of greater consequence throughout my one-year tenure at the Emerald, but the most exciting contest that I attended with pen and notepad in hand was Civil War No. 2 of the 2001-2002 wrestling season.

Coming into the Feb. 13 meet, Oregon State had lost just once in the Pa-

cific-10 Conference and Oregon held a sub-.500 in the league. The Beavers — ranked No. 2 in the Pac-10 — had won the earlier edition of the interstate rivalry on a technicality.

The second edition of the rivalry promised to be a good one and it lived up to expectations.

In front of 1,289 fans — the largest crowd all season at Mac Court — Oregon dropped the first three matched to go down 11-0. Elias Soto, Jake Leair and Eric Webb all fell to their opponents.

Then the Ducks made their charge, winning the next six weight classes. After Shaun Williams won his 125-pound weight class, Jason Harless (133 pounds) came up with a key upset victory that sent the Oregon fans soaring. Pitted against Nathan Navarro, who was ranked No. 19 in the country, Harless broke open the 2-2 match in the third round with two takedowns.

Brian Watson, Casey Hunt, Tony Overstake and Eugene Harris all came away with wins. Harris' victory brought the score to 18-11, assuring an Oregon State loss.

The Ducks won the match 18-14, and it could be considered one of the most underrated victories of the "Year of the Duck."

**Hank Hager, sports reporter:** It was the game Oregon wasn't supposed to win.

After winning its first WNIT game against St. Mary's (Calif.), the Oregon women's basketball team came up against hated foe Oregon State. The two teams had split the regular season series, but OSU's Felicia Ragland and Ericka Cook were supposed to handle the Ducks' Shaquala Williams and Cathrine Kraayeveld.

The game turned out to be one of the sloppiest and lowest scoring games of the season. The Beavers jumped out to a commanding 10-point lead at the end of the first half, and it seemed as though Oregon was through.

Not so. The Ducks bounced back, coming from 12 points down at one point in the second half, to tie Oregon State with 1:54 left in the game. Neither team could score after that, well at least not until Kraayeveld took a stand.

The sophomore grabbed an offensive rebound and put it back in with 4.4 second left, sending the Beavers home and led the way to a WNIT championship for the Ducks.

After Kraayeveld won the game for Oregon, the 3,140 in attendance went crazy, as did the Ducks, who congregated on the center court "O."

"There's no better way to beat a Beaver than to say 'You're not going to play for the rest of the season,'" Williams said after the game.

**Peter Hockaday, sports reporter:** I've covered a lot of basketball games in two years of reporting on the Oregon men's team, but only one or two have made me actually nervous, with the sweaty hands and the short breath and all that. The first was my first game as a reporter.

The second was that Kansas game in Madison, the Elite Eight game that put the Ducks so very close to the Final Four. I could feel the weight of the air in the Kohl Center bearing down on me that afternoon, just like I imagine it was bearing down on the players.

I knew I was witnessing history. You can tell by the notes I took that afternoon, which were shaky like Scooby-Doo writing and had large gaps where I decided to simply watch the amazing game. The pace of the action was frantic, the two teams burning streaks into the court as they sprinted end-to-end.

I'll never forget that game, just like I'll never forget the electricity that surrounds all Oregon athletics right now, because that's what sport is all about.

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