

GAME DAY

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Best bet
Washington at Michigan
9 a.m. Saturday, ABC

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THE BIG BOX OF FOOTBALL

Tasty morsel No. 1

Mississippi State head coach Jackie Sherrill, the unofficial "dean of SEC coaches," is the fourth-winningest active coach in Division I football. He has 175 career wins, behind only Penn State's Joe Paterno (327 wins), Florida State's Bobby Bowden (324) and South Carolina's Lou Holtz (233).

Trivia Bowl

Oregon has the second-best record in the country over its last 30 games, at 27-3. Can you name the team with the best record over that span? Answer below, but make sure to read the rest of the paper first.

Morsel No. 2

Mississippi State hasn't been to the West Coast in more than 24 years. The Bulldogs last played out west in 1977, when they faced Washington in Seattle. It is their only previous game against a Pac-10 opponent.

Rank me

Here's where Oregon and MSU finished in the final NCAA standings in 2001.

Rushing offense

Oregon.....25
MSU.....79

Passing offense

Oregon....50
MSU.....62

Total offense

Oregon....22
MSU.....85

Rushing defense

Oregon....28
MSU.....64

Passing defense

MSU.....50
Oregon...110

Total defense

MSU.....59
Oregon....81

Morsel No. 3

The Ducks have a chance to win a third-straight Pac-10 title this year. The last team to win three straight was Washington from 1990-'92.

Trivia answer

Miami, at 28-2.

Moos, Ducks find uses for 'excess' cash

The best feeling not related to sports? Digging your hand in your pocket and finding forgotten money. It's better than gold. It's free money, no strings attached.

And the best part of the best non-sports-related feeling is figuring out how to spend it. You can't just throw the money in your wallet, even if it's just a dollar or two. You have to spend it.



Adam Jude

Immediately. I imagine Bill Moos digging deep in his pocket recently, perhaps searching for an old photo of his playing days with Washington State (to show the bandwagon fans that the Cougs weren't always the preseason Pac-10 favorite), a hard hat or maybe just his Palm Pilot. It doesn't really matter what he was looking for. What matters is the \$50,000 dollars he dug up.

Can you see the look on his face? Kodak would've been proud.

Then came the hard part. Spend. Now. How?

A brief look at the athletic director's history of spending — half a million dollars for two New York billboards, \$15 million for an indoor practice facility and another \$90 million for a stadium renovation — and you know that \$50,000 was expendable. No need to save it for a rainy day.

Moos had to get really creative with the cash this time. He wanted to outdo the "Joey Heisman" poster in Manhattan, the Moshofsky Center and the 12,000 extra seats at Autzen Stadium.

With a Nike-like mentality, Moos and Oregon's savvy marketing department aimed for the world — and got the next best thing: New York. And all it cost them was the equivalent of a few pairs of Nike shoes.

Turn to **Jude**, Page 8



Courtesy Mississippi State Media Services

Jackie Sherrill, the "dean of SEC coaches," trails only Joe Paterno, Bobby Bowden and Lou Holtz in career wins among active coaches.

Mississippi State down but never out with Sherrill

The Bulldogs stumbled last season, but head coach Jackie Sherrill is still the fourth-winningest active coach today

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

In 24 seasons as a head coach at the collegiate level, Mississippi State's Jackie Sherrill has had to suffer through consecutive losing seasons just once, when the Bulldogs went 3-8 in 1995 and 5-6 in '96.

A 3-8 showing in 2001 doomed the Bulldogs to the cellar of the Southeastern Conference. They finished the season just 2-6 in conference play.

With the teams in the SEC as strong as they ever have been, another tough year for Sherrill and the Bulldogs may be just around the corner.

But there is a new sense of optimism down South. Mississippi State is just two years removed from an 8-4 season in 2000 and a 10-2 showing in 1999. Both seasons produced bowl victories, at the Independence Bowl in 2000 and the Peach Bowl in '99.

The Bulldog optimism stems from the return of seven starters on the offensive side of the ball and another six on defense. But the one player who isn't considered a returning starter could hold the key to the Bulldogs' season.

Junior Kevin Fant will take the snaps full-time for the first time in his career. The Moss Point, Miss., native played in nine games for the Bulldogs in 2001, starting three. He completed 55 percent of his passes and threw eight touchdowns. But he was also picked off three times.

"At the end of the year last year, we were a very good, competitive

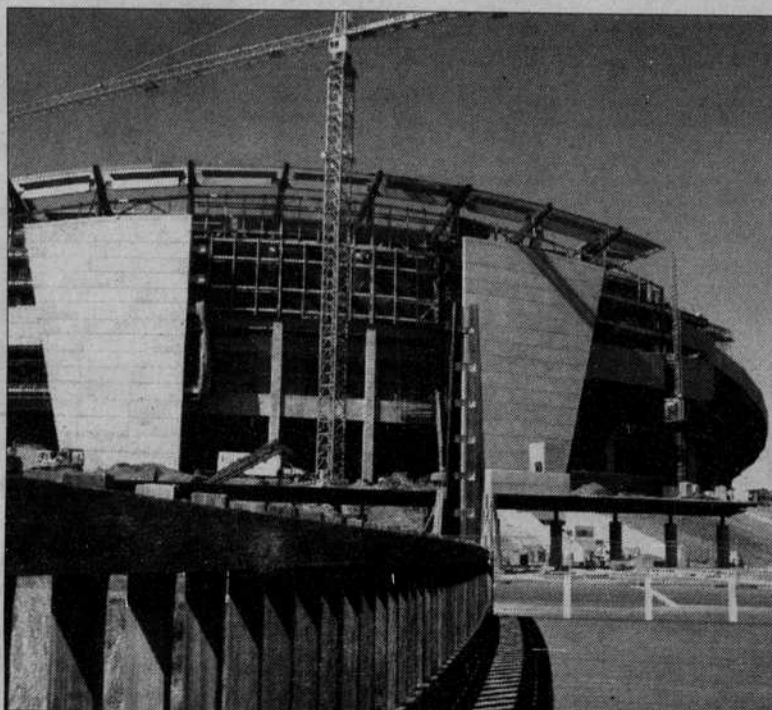
team," Sherrill said. "Kevin Fant was one of the best quarterbacks in the league last year over the last two games. He is a young man who ended the season very strong and should help this football team."

Fant does come with a warning label, though. He underwent elbow surgery during the off-season and wasn't a hundred percent during the spring. If he falters, so goes the Bulldogs. Fant is backed up by untested freshman Kyle York, who redshirted the 2001 season.

The Bulldogs return both starting wide receivers in senior Terrell Grindle and junior Justin Jenkins, both of whom have a ton of speed but are somewhat smallish in stature.

While Fant may ultimately hold the key to the team's success, it is the team's receivers that could push

Turn to **MSU**, Page 9



Adam Jones Emerald

The south entrance to Autzen Stadium has a grand look after the renovation.

New Autzen bigger, better than before

The renovated Autzen Stadium bowl has 12,000 more seats and an abundance of new amenities

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

For those freshmen heading over the Autzen footbridge this fall, an entirely different sight will greet them than the one familiar to those freshmen that came before.

Instead of a crater that doubled as a football stadium, these freshmen will see a flying saucer. Instead of a hole in the ground, they'll see a powerful statement of just how far Oregon football has come in recent years.

The renovated stadium is near completion, and the new Willamette River side — which is now the official

"front entrance" of Autzen — is a stunning "hello" from the stadium. The addition of 12,000 extra seats is also stunning, considering that the original shape of Autzen was preserved in the renovation.

Does it need to be said that the Ducks themselves are chomping at the proverbial bit to get inside?

"As it started to go up, as it took the form and shape you saw in the computer renderings, the magnitude is tremendously impressive," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "I think our players are really excited, more so than I would have believed."

Two nights before they officially started fall camp, the Ducks got a surprise from Bellotti — a trip into the stadium in the dark, to watch a

Turn to **Autzen**, Page 8