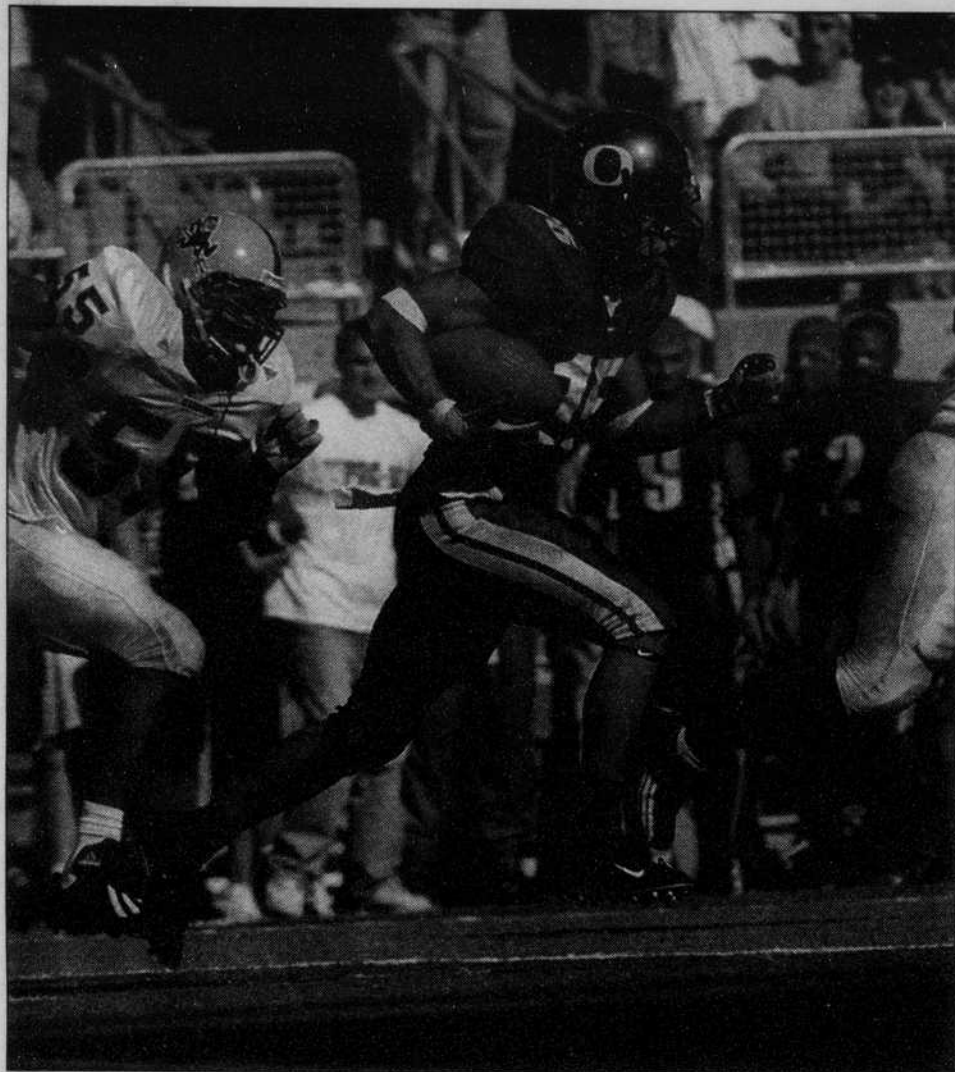




Jeremy Forrest Emerald

Keenan Howry (15) needs one catch against Southern California to set the Pac-10 consecutive-game record for catches.

Volleyball

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midway point of the Pac-10 season came in 1998, when Oregon defeated Oregon State, 3-0.

Still, it is an Oregon team that has played tough in spite of adversity. Of the Ducks' nine first-half matches last season, only one — against Oregon State — lasted more than three games.

This season, the Ducks have pushed California and the Sun Devils to a full five games, narrowly losing each time.

"We have had just about 14 players on our team play at the upper 90th percentile of their abilities,"

Oregon head coach Carl Ferreira said. "If someone can find for me the disappointment when human beings perform at the upper limits, then I'm in the wrong profession."

"It's all about your definition of what you're doing. On a consistent night-in, night-out basis, day-in, day-out basis, these 14 players have been truly phenomenal."

Mid-season report card

The halfway mark of the Pac-10 season has come for the Ducks, and even though the squad has yet to win a conference match, it is a group that has been improving each week.

Offense: Senior Lindsay Closs has been stellar as usual, but it is

freshmen Kelly Russell and Dariam Acevedo that have provided the spark. Sophomore Lauren Westendorff has provided a solid presence and junior Heather Gilmore has filled a role off the bench that is needed for an above-average offense. **Grade:** B-

Defense: As the Ducks have said all season, a good defense leads to a good offense. Junior Lindsay Murphy has been a rock as the libero, as evidenced by her dig totals. Sophomore Katie O'Neil has been valuable off the bench and overall as a team, Oregon is more consistent than last season. **Grade:** C+

Intensity: If the Ducks didn't have it, they wouldn't have even

come close to defeating California and Arizona State. Oregon seemingly plays each match as if it didn't have a record, and each point scored brings screams and shouts from the court and the bench. **Grade:** A-

Experience: This is where it gets touchy for the Ducks. With four freshmen playing significant roles on the team — Acevedo, Russell, Jodi Bell and Jaclyn Jones — it would be hard to have a wealth of significant experience.

The group has provided a great spark, especially Russell and Bell, but a little more experience — as Ferreira and the team have alluded to — and Oregon may have come

up with a victory. Yet, the Ducks are getting better and are showing it each match. **Grade:** C.

A look ahead

Oregon visits No. 6 Stanford Friday in Palo Alto. The Cardinal leads the all-time series, 36-2, as Oregon has not defeated Stanford since 1989 when the Ducks won in five games.

Saturday, Oregon travels across the bay to take on California. The Ducks have fared better against the Golden Bears, although Oregon has not come out on top since 1998. Cal leads the all-time series, 35-12.

Contact the sports reporter at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

Football

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Bowl. Not the Bowl Championship Series.

"The faster we get off the last game and get focused on USC, the better," Bellotti said. "I've challenged them to emphasize the fun aspect and the competitive aspect in practice to make us better so the games are easier."

"There are so many parallels to last year that I'd just rather not think about it entirely. I want to try to break away from the eerie things that are similar to last year."

Jason Fife
Oregon quarterback

Junior quarterback Jason Fife, who suffered his first loss as a starter, said the team has a good attitude as it prepares for No. 15 USC, a team the Ducks have defeated in four-straight years.

"I'm glad (the loss) happened so that we have a game afterwards where we can take out our aggression," Fife said. "I think we're going to see a good week of practice. We have a general good attitude about this loss and how we're going to come back."

The loss to ASU, however, does bring to mind Oregon's 2001 loss to Stanford. Both losses occurred during the third week of October when Oregon was 6-0 and ranked in the top-10.

Of course, after the 2001 loss, the Ducks went undefeated en route to a Pac-10 championship and Fiesta Bowl win.

"We were saying, 'Try not to let history repeat itself,' and it did," Mitchell said of the loss

to ASU. "So hopefully we can say, 'Let history repeat itself,' and we'll keep going."

Fife was not so cynical about the similarities to last season.

"There are so many parallels to last year that I'd just rather not think about it entirely," Fife said. "I want to try to break away from the eerie things that are similar to last year. With that in mind, I'm just going to worry about the offensive game plan and beating SC."

Run stoppers

The Oregon run defense is the best in the Pac-10.

The Ducks allow only 75.4 yards per game on the ground and have given up just four rushing touchdowns this season.

Arizona State netted 31 yards rushing in a win Saturday, the first time in Bellotti's career that he has lost when an opponent was held to less than 100 yards rushing. Prior to Saturday, Bellotti was 27-0 at Oregon when an opponent was held to less than 100 yards rushing.

All hail Howry

With a catch against USC, Keenan Howry could have his name engraved in the Pac-10 record books.

The senior wide receiver has caught a pass in 42 straight games — dating back to his second game as a freshman in 1999 — a mark that ties the Pac-10 record. Dennis Northcutt of Arizona set the record for consecutive games with a catch from 1996 to 1999.

Coincidentally, USC senior receiver Kareem Kelly has matched Howry. Both could make history at Autzen Stadium on Saturday.

The NCAA record for consecutive games with a reception is 46, set by New Mexico's Carl Winston in the early '90s.

Contact the senior sports reporter at adamjude@dailyemerald.com.

Weekly sports poll

Just because we don't write about it doesn't mean it goes away.

The Oregon Daily Emerald's weekly sports poll is back, baby, and judging from immediate reaction from around the country, it's better than ever.

Not really. A whopping 12 people voted in this week's poll. And you call yourselves sports fans.

So we're going to try this again. We've asked you to vote on Onterio Smith's chances for the Heisman Trophy, the football team's chance to go to the Fiesta Bowl and the volleyball squad's chance to win a Pac-10 game this season.

This week, we ask the question that seems to be burning in many people's minds around campus. Now is your chance to weigh in on how many games you think the football squad will win in its last six attempts, assuming the Ducks head to a bowl game.

Is it six? None? Three? Only you, the intrepid reader, can decide in the weekly sports poll.

So mobilize those fingers, type www.dailyemerald.com into your keyboard, click the "sports" link and get out the vote.

Cross Country

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Men's head coach Martin Smith has assembled a strong team, led by senior Jason Hartmann. Hartmann, a two-time All-American, could become the eighth Duck ever to earn All-American honors three times.

Post Pre-Nationals

The women harriers got another meet under their belts Saturday as they raced against top teams from across the country. They finished 18th as a team, with red-shirt senior Carrie Zografos and junior Magdalena Sandoval still healing from injuries.

"They did a good job in a pressure-packed situation," Heinonen said.

Zografos led the Oregon women with a 53rd-place finish. Sandoval finished fourth for Oregon, placing 122nd overall.

Oregon finished ahead of three nationally-ranked teams: Florida State, Dartmouth and Idaho.

Pac-10 runs hard, plays hard

Stanford currently has a hold on the Pac-10 cross country lead, with the men ranked first in the national poll and the women ranked second. Both teams won their respective race at the Pre-National meet Saturday, with each team's top runner

finishing second overall.

The Pac-10 has four teams in both the men's and women's Division-I polls. Joining Oregon and Stanford in the men's poll are 25th-ranked Arizona State and 35th-ranked Washington.

"They did a good job in a pressure-packed situation."

Tom Heinonen
Oregon head coach

With second-ranked Stanford leading the way in the women's national poll, Arizona State is ranked 17th, while UCLA is ranked 19th and Washington is ranked 25th.

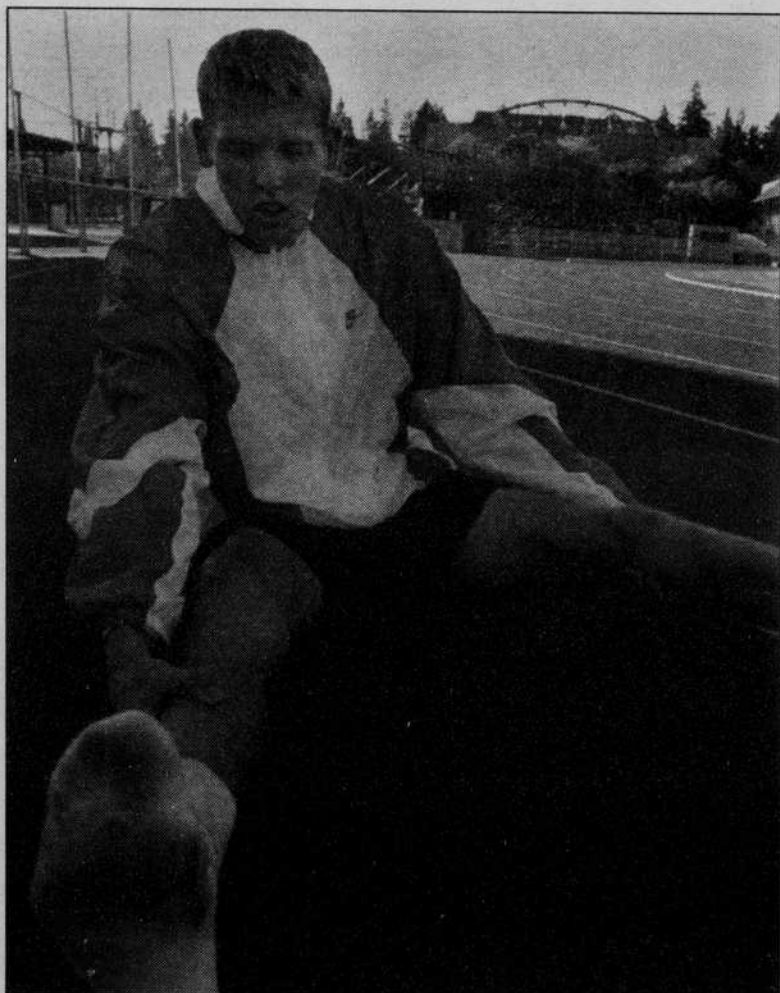
Pac-10 Championship changes

The Pac-10 conference is raising the number of runners a single team can enter at the championship meet.

As with most meets, the Pac-10 had limited team size to seven. Starting at the Nov. 2 meet, that restriction has been lifted and team sizes may be increased at the school's discretion.

"That's good for us right now. It gives us more flexibility in selecting the team," said Heinonen.

Mindi Rice is a freelance writer for the Emerald.



Emerald

Senior Jason Hartmann and the Oregon Ducks want to run at the NCAA Championships this season. This year, the race occurs in Terre Haute, Ind.