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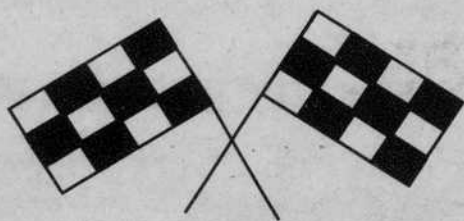
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Down the center

Dan Weaver ditched baseball and other things for the mere chance to play for the Ducks

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

You'd be daunted by this task, wouldn't you? Surely.

You only weigh 225 pounds, which shouldn't seem like an "only" for a normal person but is actually quite small for an offensive lineman. So you know you have to put on at least 50 pounds to even have a chance at walking on to the Pacific-10 Conference power you've idolized since you could walk on the ground.

In order to put on that much weight, you'll have to spend a year and a half away from football, the sport you love. That time will be spent in the weight room and working a job to make ends meet.

Then, after all that, you might not make the team. You certainly can't count on a scholarship. If you do make the team, you probably won't even play until your senior year.

Daunting? Not for Dan Weaver. Why? Well, let's just say if there was a movie entitled "Rudy II: My Brother Rudy," Dan Weaver would be the hero.

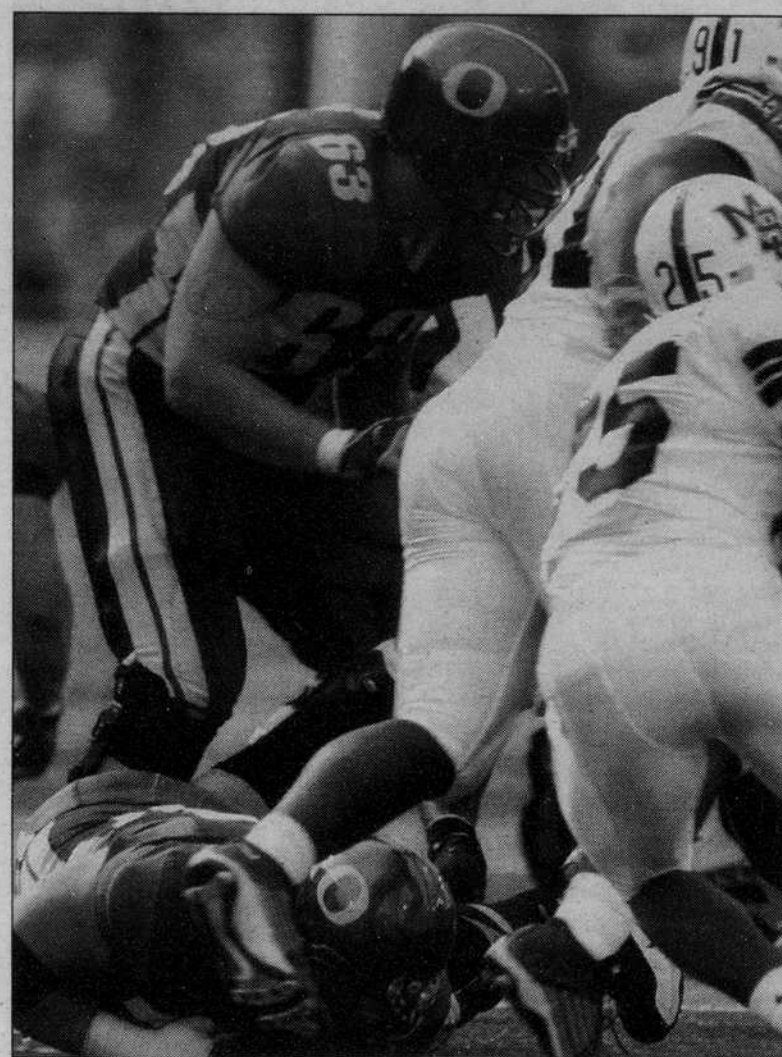
Jed Weaver, a former Oregon tight end and Dan Weaver's older brother, walked on to the team in 1994 and blazed a path for his younger sibling to do the same. But Dan Weaver rose rapidly — much more rapidly than his brother — through the ranks to become the Ducks' starting center and the anchor of a spectacularly underrated offensive line.

"It's easy to go after something when you know it can be accomplished," Weaver said. "That's how I started contact with (Oregon), was through my brother."

Like Jed Weaver, Dan Weaver has a staggering work ethic akin to something from the silver screen, and that work ethic has led to him to where he is now.

But it didn't come easily. Weaver, a three-sport star at Redmond High School in central Oregon, was an all-league center but couldn't get a scholarship offer, even from the Ducks. So he spent the next year and a half working at a casting plant in his home town and volunteering to coach the freshman football team at his alma mater.

"He was small in high school; he



Adam Amato Emerald

Oregon center Dan Weaver (63) gained 55 pounds before walking on to the team in 2000. His brother, tight end Jed Weaver, was a walk-on for the Ducks in 1994.

did all his growing after he got here," backup center Robin Knebel said. "If he was the same size as everybody else, he would've been a scholarship guy just like everyone else."

So Weaver hit the weights, put on 55 pounds of muscle and came to Oregon in the winter of 2000 with a mission: make the team.

That he did, impressing the coaches enough with his improvements over spring drills to ensure himself a spot on the team as the short snapper in the fall.

"I doubted myself coming in," Weaver said. "But after those first spring drills and being able to watch myself on tape improving, being able to block guys that are supposed to be all-world, that's when you get the feeling that you

could do it if you just work hard."

Weaver's progression didn't stop there. He started taking all the short snaps (mostly field goals) for the Ducks and worked his way onto the offensive line. By the end of the year, it was clear that Weaver would be much more than "that walk-on" by the time 2001 rolled around.

"Dan just worked his way in, and seems to be here by his effort, by his work ethic," fellow offensive lineman Joey Forster said. "He really helps us, too, because he's a really smart guy. He uses that to his advantage; he outsmarts his opponent."

Weaver's intelligence is well recognized — he was a Pac-10 first-team all-academic honoree last season and was named to the Veri-

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