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# Giving thanks for sporting life

OK, so it's getting cold outside and finals are getting ready to hit us in the face harder than the snow that's probably going to fall in January.

But there's plenty of reasons to be thankful as we head into the end of the year.

Be thankful for college basketball and its field of 65.

Be especially thankful for MacArthur Court. The old barn is turning 76 this season and it has never looked better.

Be thankful for ESPN, ESPN2 and ESPN Classic. No matter what time of day it is, you'll probably be able to find a game so you can skip studying.

Be thankful that Oregon is in no way related to Michigan. To have to pull down championship banners due to corruption has got to be embarrassing.

Be thankful you're not Chris Webber. The Sacramento King puts the "ass" in "embarrassing" regarding the whole Michigan mess.

Be thankful for sweatshirts when you're sitting outside of Mac Court in early January waiting for the Oregon-Arizona game.

Be thankful for the Pit Crew. They make The Pit the place to play in the Pacific-10 Conference.

Be thankful for the Seattle and Silicon Valley Bowls. Without them,



**Hank Hager**  
Behind the dish

Oregon wouldn't even be practicing right now.

Be thankful your name isn't Rick Neuheisel. Just because.

Be somewhat thankful for USC. Without the Trojans, the Pac-10 would be just another conference this season.

Be thankful it never rains at Autzen. Oops. Never mind.

Be thankful it never rains at Mac Court. Anymore.

Be thankful for Donald "the true Oregon mascot" Duck. Mandrake? Creative name, but come on. It's like sacrificing tradition for a little publicity.

Be thankful for Sports Illustrated. The magazine polished its image even further with an in-depth piece of Washington State receiver Devard Darling, who lost his twin-brother last season when the two were at Florida State. Truly touching.

Be thankful for coaches like Ernie Kent and Mike Bellotti. They're two of the most successful coaches the school has ever had and two of the more stand-up leaders in collegiate sports.

Be especially thankful for track and field coach Tom Heinonen. He is an establishment at Oregon and will be sorely missed when he steps down in June when the season ends. A class act.

Be thankful for backups. The Oregon quarterback position battle between Kellen Clemens and Jason Fife should be an interesting one next season.

Be thankful the BCS Championship isn't at the Rose Bowl this

season. What a shame it was last year that Oregon had to play at the Fiesta Bowl and lose all the tradition.

Be thankful for 4,500 Lane County residents. These are the true fans, supporting Oregon women's hoops at Mac Court, rain or shine.

Be thankful fall term is almost over. It's been a long and tiresome one.

Be thankful baseball still survives at Oregon State. It's been more than 20 years since Oregon fielded a team, and it's a shame the Ducks don't any more.

Be thankful Oregon fans don't have to attend games at Reser Stadium. Even though Autzen Stadium became too corporate this year, it still beats the Beavers' pad any day of the week and twice on Sunday.

Be thankful Oregon isn't California, Alabama or Kentucky. Each of these three schools was banned from a bowl this season, and even though the Ducks didn't have the greatest year, going to a bowl is still better than watching some other school.

Be thankful for athletes like Cal Ripken Jr. — guys who play with a team their entire career because they love it. I thought Jim Thome was that type of player. Guess I was wrong.

Be thankful there's always another season lurking right around the corner.

And whatever you do, be thankful it's just a game.

Contact the sports reporter at [hankhager@dailyemerald.com](mailto:hankhager@dailyemerald.com). His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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**West**  
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poor man's way of making that bottle of high society go the extra mile, and with golf that mile is oh so long. As for the gin, the almonds make it

smell like pine trees, so it's like you're there in the action.

Keeping with the refined thing, tennis goes hand in hand with a nice red wine. Though the sport has an aggressive side, it is still rooted in calm dignity and tradition — much like wine. The same stoic look you see at a tennis match is required at any wine tasting while swirling your drink and commenting on its body and vintage. Similarly, during the match you can talk about a player's body and vintage.

These are only suggestions, and you should expand your palette to

find your own favorite sports sippers. Or not. I don't have to drink to have a good time watching sports... Actually, yes, I do.

**Mason General's Warning:** Drinking can be hazardous to your health and make you do humiliating things, such as sing "I Will Always Love You" on the karaoke machine. People under the legal drinking age should not drink and get caught by writing about getting into bars with fake IDs.

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**Men's**  
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Kansas is still a team with much more talent than Portland or Pacific. But Kent said that Oregon's four games to this point have done a good job of preparing the team for its challenge on Saturday. "A lot of these teams that we've

played run the same type of systems as Kansas," Kent said. "They might not have the size or the talent, but the games were still good for us."

So until Saturday, the Ducks can now join in with the chants of the students.

We want Kansas.

Contact the sports editor at [peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com](mailto:peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com).

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