

# Fife, Clemens set to battle again in 2003

Oregon quarterbacks end the season with as many questions as they had at the start of 2002

## Seattle Bowl

**Peter Hockaday**  
Sports Editor

SEATTLE — One year later, the Ducks find themselves in a familiar position.

Who will play quarterback next season?

After both Jason Fife and Kellen Clemens had mostly unspectacular performances in Oregon's 38-17 loss to Wake Forest in the Seattle Bowl on Dec. 30, Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti and the Ducks find themselves with a handful of quarterback questions. Almost as many questions as they had after the departure last year of Joey Harrington, who was taken third overall in last year's NFL draft.

"The quarterback job is open," Bellotti said after the game.

Fife started the Seattle Bowl but lasted only three drives before Clemens took over as the main signal-caller for the rest of the game until the closing minutes, when Fife took back the reins. Fife threw seven passes in the first half, completing only one four-yard swing pass to Keenan Howry.

Clemens showed more confidence when he was handed the ball, but he was unable to engineer

the Ducks any kind of comeback as they got within seven points at 24-17, but never closer.

"I thought Kellen did OK; it's hard to evaluate him without looking at the film," Bellotti said. "But obviously we're looking for more than OK."

Clemens completed 61 percent of his passes, on 19-of-31 passing, for 161 yards and one touchdown.

"I think we would've been booed if we had taken Kellen out of there," Fife said. "He had the hot hand."

Fife, meanwhile, had the cold hand from the beginning. He completed his first pass, the swing to Howry, but later in the drive missed Howry badly in the end-zone on a crucial third-down play. On the second drive, Fife missed Samie Parker twice as the Ducks went three-and-out.

After another three-and-out drive in which Fife threw two incomplete passes, Bellotti pulled the junior in favor of the redshirt freshman.

Clemens also completed his first pass but missed his second attempt on an unsuccessful drive. Clemens didn't find his rhythm until the last drive of the first half, when he engineered a nine-play, 61-yard masterpiece with time winding down. The drive culminated in Clemens' seven-yard strike to Parker, a touchdown that brought Oregon within 21-10 at the half. Clemens was 7-for-7 passing on the drive.

So now the Ducks face the same decisions as last year, only this time the decisions seem more ominous.

"It's going to be competitive," senior wide receiver Keenan Howry said of Oregon's quarterback conundrum. "It's going to be won in spring ball and fall camp."

That was the philosophy last year after the bowl season, and Fife proved to be the stronger of the two quarterbacks, especially after an impressive outing in the Spring Game. He carried that success into the regular season, posting impressive statistics as the Ducks moved to 6-0 after six games. But as Oregon started playing tougher opponents, Fife went the other way. He became shaky, even shouldering the blame when Oregon failed to generate much offense at Washington State.

Clemens finally got a chance to prove himself but threw an interception on his first pass attempt against Washington.

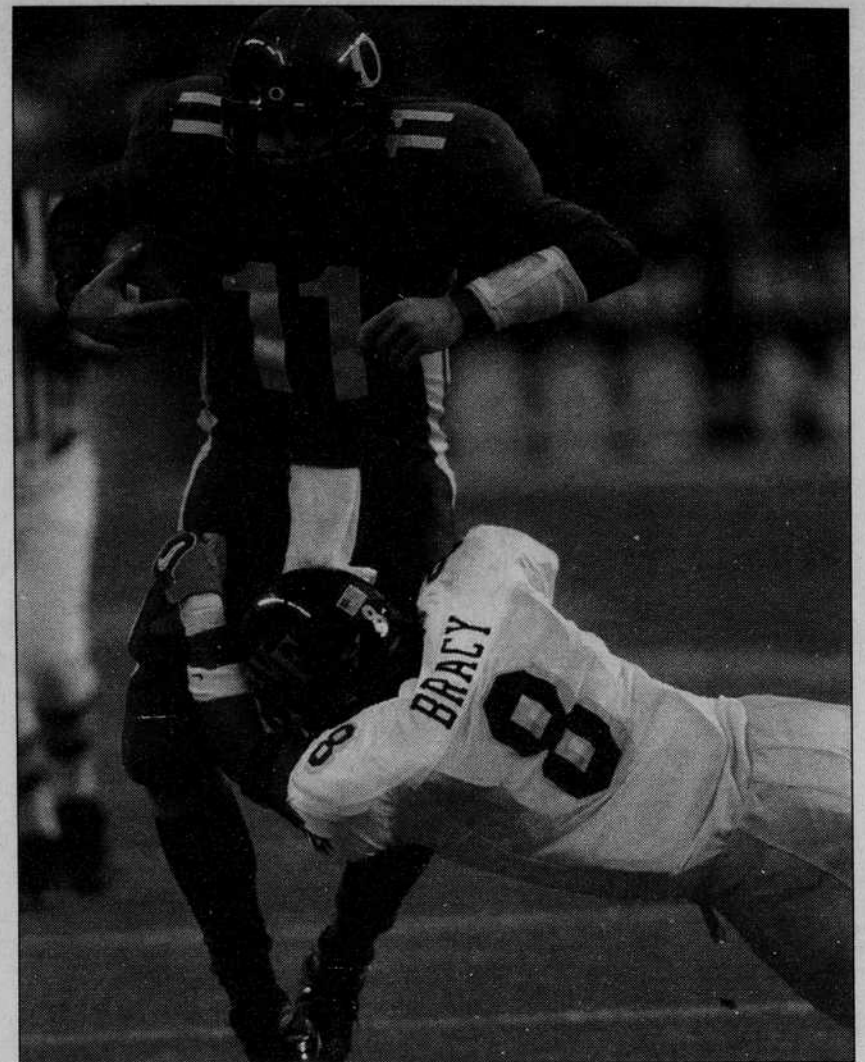
And that led to this week, when Bellotti told the media he would play both quarterbacks and stuck to his word.

"The coaches made the decision based on how we were performing," Fife said of this week's quarterback shift.

And after a dismal loss in the Seattle Bowl, Fife and Clemens will be the answers to the same questions that came up last year. Only this year, they'll have the motivation of that loss to help them find the answers.

"This will fuel our fire for next year," Fife said.

Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailymerald.com.



Adam Amato Emerald

Kellen Clemens (11) played most of the Seattle Bowl, but couldn't lead a Duck comeback.

# 49ers come back from 24 down to stun Giants

**Bonnie DeSimone**  
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

SAN FRANCISCO — They say comatose patients can still hear, that people in the room with them should never stop talking.

The New York Giants, up by 24 late in the third quarter of Sunday's NFC wild-card game, talked trash. The San Francisco 49ers, with their vital signs apparently flatlined, got it loud and clear, kept talking to each other and kept their cool.

"I heard somebody ask who could make a play," 49ers receiver Terrell Owens said of the team's

determination as the clock ran down. "I said I could. Then other guys chimed in."

Quarterback Jeff Garcia operated in the two-minute offense with the swift improvisation of an emergency-room surgeon to lead the 49ers back to within five points, then connected with Tai Streets on a 13-yard touchdown pass with 1 minute left.

Although the 49ers failed to convert the subsequent two-point conversion, an errant Giants snap snuffed a 41-yard field-goal attempt as time ran out, giving San Francisco a 39-38 victory. It

was the second-biggest resuscitation in NFL playoff history, and it sent the crowd of 66,318 at 3Com Park into a delirium that could have woken the dead.

"In the fourth quarter, it seemed like we had so much more energy," said 49ers wide receiver J.J. Stokes. "They were taking their helmets off, wincing, breathing hard. I think they got winded. I think they relaxed and took us for granted a little bit."

"They were just a bunch of loudmouths. All they did was talk, talk, trying to get us out of our game. It didn't work. They

lost. They go home."

Garcia passed for 331 yards and three touchdowns and rushed for another. Owens, coming off a two-week layoff due to a groin injury, also did double duty, throwing for one key 25-yard gain and hauling in nine passes for 177 yards.

The 49ers erased a 38-14 deficit, and one illustrious observer called it the most stirring comeback in franchise history.

"This was unsurpassed, unbelievable," said former 49ers coach Bill Walsh, now a team consultant. "As great a game as we've had. We finally broke out after an average to

good season. This team had to demonstrate to each other that they could play a great team and win."

There was speculation that a loss Sunday would cost 49ers coach Steve Mariucci his job. Instead, he engineered the biggest postseason rally since Buffalo came back from 35-3 third-quarter deficit against Houston 10 years ago to win 41-38 — and the 49ers survived to face Tampa Bay next week.

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## Horoscope by Linda C. Black

**TODAY'S BIRTHDAY** (Jan. 6). A friend can teach you how to achieve results you never thought possible. If somebody else can do it, why not you? If you don't know how, study. Abundance is almost within your grasp. To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging. **ARIES** (March 21-April 19) Today is a 5. Is self-doubt threatening to undermine your confidence? Or is that your intuition warning you to slow down? Watch, look and listen. **TAURUS** (April 20-May 20) Today is an 8. You've had to stuff your emotions for the past couple of days, but it's not wise to do that forever. Schedule private time to share things with an excellent listener. **GEMINI** (May 21-June 21) Today is a 6. You could spend the whole day with a fascinating friend, discussing plans for the future, but that would cause trouble now. Limit that conversation, and take care of somebody else who needs your attention. **CANCER** (June 22-July 22) Today is an 8. The more you think about it, the more it makes sense — something that happened a long time ago. Loving and growing older helps us understand. **LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22) Today is a 5. The work you're putting in could lead to a promotion and a change in status. That leads to influential new friends, so put your back into it! **VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Today is an 8. Does it seem as if your task is becoming just

a little bit easier? That's because you've finally gotten part of the problem to fall into alignment. Good work. **LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) Today is a 7. Your goals can be advanced by serving others now. Put your heart into it. They can tell if you aren't. **SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Today is an 8. A potentially difficult situation at home can, and will, be overcome. You're a paragon of patience, but it doesn't hurt to be reminded. **SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Today is a 5. If you're contemplating a change, get a wise older person's advice. No need to learn everything the hard way. Use somebody else's experience. **CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Today is an 8. More work, more ideas, more profits. You're on a roll. Follow through on plans you've long contemplated. Long-held plans will be the most successful ones. **AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Today is a 6. If you're not getting through to a person you love, ask a friend to intervene. Sometimes it's easier to bring up a tough subject with a moderator present. **PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20) Today is an 8. Past difficulties have made you stronger. What you'll go through now to defend your position is nothing in comparison.

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