

Cheerleading

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"partner competition," and, of course, the Duck himself will enter the mascot competition.

The often-underappreciated cheerleaders have been working even more than usual on their routine and say they're excited to finally be getting down to business.

"I've been nervous all week, with the sweaty palms and short breath and all that," senior cheerleader Amber Harshbarger said. "It's bad."

Harshbarger is a "flyer," one of two distinct categories of cheerleaders that fans may not recognize. The flyers, who focus mainly on stunts and throws, are separate from dancers, who don't do stunts. Raish said Oregon is one of the few programs in the country to have separate dancers and flyers.

There are 12 flyers, 12 dancers and 12 men on the 36-member Oregon squad, but the Ducks will send nine flyers, two dancers and 11 men to the competition.

When the squad performed its routine in front of the Pit Crew at halftime of a men's game against Washington State, the crowd gave the Ducks a standing ovation.

"When you have people you know there cheering you on, it's amazing," Davis said. "To be doing it in front of them, and a cheering crowd, is beyond belief."

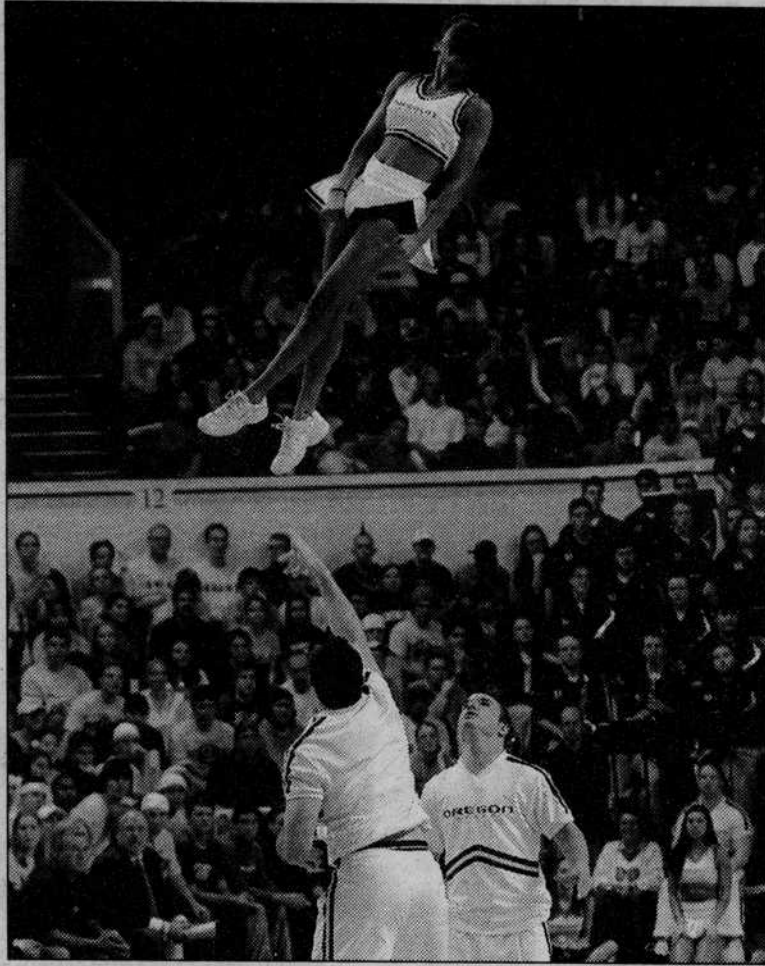
The men, Raish said, are the most overlooked component of the team.

"People will ask me, 'How are your girls doing?'" Raish said. "I'll say 'My girls — and my guys — are doing just fine.'"

It may be a man's world, but it belongs to the women. At least according to senior Ryan Long.

"They have a lot more material to learn," said Long, a veteran cheerleader. "There's a lot more pressure on them to perform."

That pressure leads to often back-breaking work hours as the Ducks try to improve. The team spends 2 to 3 hours every day practicing, and that doesn't include the necessary weightlifting and local appearances, or the community service that Raish requires. And of course, they have to



Adam Amato Emerald

The Oregon cheerleaders will enter the team competition and a pairs competition.

go to all the games.

They are, in short, varsity-sport type hours.

"We get funding from the Athletic Department, and they house us and do a great job taking care of us, but we're not an NCAA-recognized sport," Raish said. "We have to raise all our own money."

The cheerleaders did, in fact, raise their own money to make the trip to nationals. They charged for appearances, had auctions, and had one very prominent sugar daddy: Duck announcer Don Essig, who voluntarily sold "It Never Rains at Autzen Stadium" T-shirts to benefit the cheerleading squad.

All that money comes down to two and a half minutes of cheerleading wizardry in the middle of Las Vegas.

"What's hard to believe is that it's taken two full months to perfect two and a half minutes," Raish said.

Two months of work for a two-and-a-half-minute routine. To these cheerleaders, that tradeoff is beautiful.

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Men's

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opportunity to play... and his energy was great," Kent said. "We'll reevaluate the situation again on Saturday."

Oregon hosts California at 6 p.m. Saturday.

"We are a force to be reckoned with," Crosswhite said. "We're going to take it to Cal. They put it on

us down there and we want to get them in here."

The Bears (15-4, 8-2), who defeated Oregon State, 84-71, Thursday, beat the Ducks, 88-72, Jan. 9 in Berkeley.

"We have to win Saturday's game," Kent said.

Contact the senior sports reporter at adamjude@dailyemerald.com

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