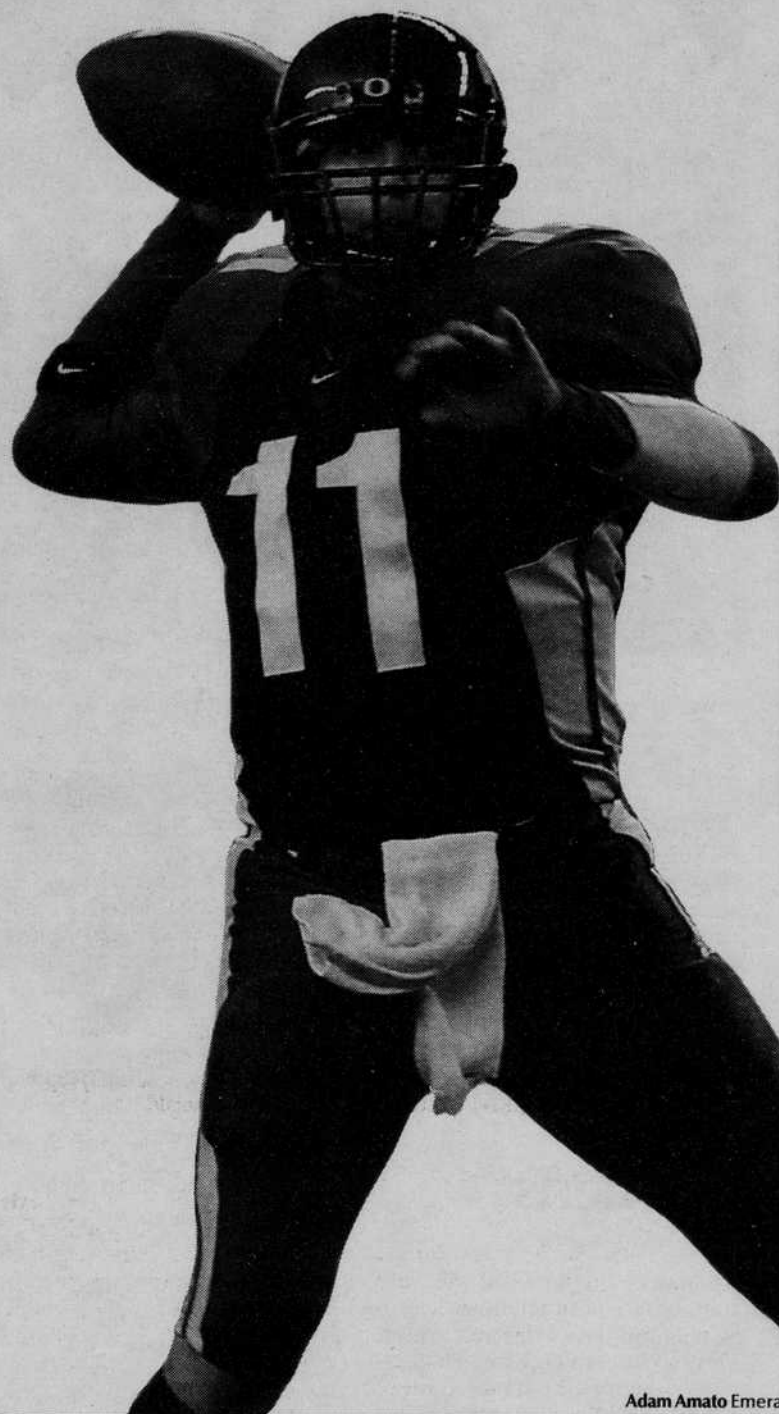


Thursday, April 17, 2003



Adam Amato Emerald

Front-passer?

Kellen Clemens is looking to take advantage of his opportunities and earn Oregon's starting quarterback spot

Spring football

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

The moment sits in a season-long lowlight reel that defined Oregon's 2002 season.

Autzen Stadium, filled to the brim as the Ducks take on hated rival Washington, welcomes quarterback Kellen Clemens onto the field at the start of Oregon's first drive of the third quarter. It is Clemens' first game action since Oregon played Portland State almost two months ago.

In Clemens' first pass attempt, Washington cornerback Derrick Johnson steps in front of Duck receiver Keenan Howry, picking off the quarterback's crisply thrown but off-target pass.

"It wasn't the first pick of my career and it won't be my last," Clemens said. "It was my first one in college, but it won't be the last. That's part of the position. You've got to push through it and stay mentally tough."

It's easy for Clemens, now embroiled in a quarterback competition with Jason Fife during Oregon's spring practices, to look back at the play and pick out the positives. After a season that saw the Ducks fall from No. 5 in the country midway through the year to eighth place in the Pacific-10 Conference, it's hard.

But Clemens is doing just that.

There is no true starter at the position so far for the Ducks. Fife is listed as No. 1 on the depth chart, but in reality, he could be wearing "1A" on the back of his jersey. Clemens, on the other hand, could very well don "1B."

Head coach Mike Bellotti likely isn't going to name a starter until fall camp, and both know that.

"I don't even think we're thinking about it," Fife said. "We're just coming out here and playing and doing the best we can."

So now, for Clemens, a redshirt sophomore-to-be, learning from last season's perils can only make him better.

That includes a stint in the Seattle Bowl, Oregon's reward for finishing the regular season with a 7-5 record. Clemens eventually finished the game 19-of-31 for 161 yards and one touchdown, coming in after watching from the sidelines for the first three series of the game.

He knew he was coming in, having heard from Oregon's coaches one week prior to the game against Wake Forest. Still, it would be tough for the former Burns High School star to adjust.

"When we got on the bus to go to the game, I sat down and was sitting right behind (offensive guard) Joey Forster," Clemens said. "He turned around and looked at me, and I'm sure my eyes were the size of golf balls, and he asks, 'are you nervous?'"

"Yeah, I'm nervous." He looked at me and said, "Don't be nervous. At the chance of failing, be excited about the opportunity you've got to show everybody what you've got." I said, "Wow, this guy, who was a freshman All-American, has enough confidence in me to say that." I couldn't wait to get on the field.

The Ducks were lambasted by Wake Forest, 38-17, ending the dire season on a low note. What the game did do, however, was open the door for Clemens to possibly step in and take over the starting opportunity.

"Personally, each one of us wants to start for this football team," Clemens said. "But at the same time, there's something much more than Jason or I or Jason and I combined. And that's the Oregon Ducks winning some games this year."

At Oregon's first scrimmage, held last Saturday, neither Clemens nor Fife played particularly well. Clemens, specifically, was 8-of-13 for 102 yards and one score. The touchdown throw came in his first series of the day, when Kellen Taylor beat Marques Binns on a 44-yard toss.

But Clemens, who stands 6-foot-2 and looks as though he could stand in as a linebacker, has the capability of doing much more, especially in Oregon's scrimmages to come.

And yet, on the same token, he has a lot of room

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Track heads to 'mountain' in Golden State

The Oregon men and women will send contingents down to the Mt. SAC Relays this weekend

Track and field

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

After winning the Pepsi Team Invitational, the Oregon men's and women's track teams are peaking. But they don't want to summit this season quite yet, even if this weekend's meet is on a mountain.

Actually, the Mt. San Antonio College Relays only sound like they'll take place on a hillside. In reality, the track in Walnut, Calif., will be flat enough for the Ducks, who will compete in the meet today through Saturday. And the amount of talent at Mt. SAC — one of the biggest regular-season meets of 2003 — will look to some Ducks like Everest looks to a climber.

Not that the Oregon athletes don't relish the challenge.

"It's going to be tough competition, but I love competition," high jumper Jenny Brogdon said. "We all do."

Brogdon is one of 27 women who will make the trek to Mt. SAC. Fourteen men will head south. For those Ducks, one of the keys this weekend and the rest of the regular season is pacing. With a new NCAA Regional-qualifying program that has lower standards than in the past, most of Oregon's stars have already qualified for the regional meet on May 30, where they will try to make NCAAs. That means the rest of the season is building toward that regional meet rather than making an explosive NCAA-qualifying mark. Brogdon shared her perspective.

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Adam Amato Emerald

Travis Anderson (52) and Matt Scherer (98) will try to qualify for the NCAA West Regionals in the 400 this weekend at Mt. SAC.

Softball sweeps doubleheader

Oregon shuts out Portland State in both games on Wednesday in Portland

Softball

Mindi Rice
Sports Reporter

No. 20 Oregon needed a lift after losing two of three weekend games to Pacific-10 Conference rivals No. 2 UCLA and No. 3 Washington.

The Ducks (23-13 overall, 3-7 Pac-10) found just that as they successfully shut out Portland State (13-21, 5-3 Pacific Coast Softball Conference) — 4-0 and 5-0 — in a doubleheader on Wednesday.

"I thought we played very well in both games today," head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "Offensively we were clicking and I thought all of our pitchers did a tremendous job. These are very important wins for us as we aim to reach the postseason."

Freshman pitcher Amy Harris led the Ducks in the pitching circle while senior infielders Alyssa Laux and Lynsey Haij led Oregon at the plate.

In the first game, Harris and junior Anissa Meashintubby combined to throw a four-hitter in the Ducks' 4-0 shutout of Portland State.

Oregon opened the scoring in the third inning as the Ducks moved a baserunner around the diamond with key hits.

Sophomore second baseman Erin Goodell led off the inning with a walk. Goodell advanced to second on a single to right field by third baseman Haij.

A sacrifice fly by senior designated player Amber Hutchison moved Goodell up to third. She then scored on a throwing error by Portland State catcher Rose Rutledge.

The Ducks added three insurance runs in the fourth as

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