

Wednesday, April 30, 2003

# UO linebackers prepare for resurgence

Next year should be a different story for the Oregon linebackers after a sub-par 2002 season

## Spring football notes

**Hank Hager**  
Sports Reporter

How good is the Oregon linebacking corps going to be next season?

Just ask them.

"We could be as good as we want to be," Kevin Mitchell said. "The thing is how well we gel as a unit. For us to do that, we need to be able to know what each other is thinking. That's what it's going to take. Pretty much a lot of bonding time."

"It's one of those things where you've got to mold together and become one."

With Mitchell returning to practice last week, the group — which is also expected to have Jerry Matson and David Martin as starters — is going to be experienced.

Mitchell and Martin are both seniors while Matson is a junior. Mitchell has been at the forefront of the Oregon defense from the beginning of his tenure with the Ducks, and the other two played significant roles last season.

Throw in Justin Andrews, Ramone Reed and fall newcomer Marcus Miller, and that's a pretty good recipe for success come September.

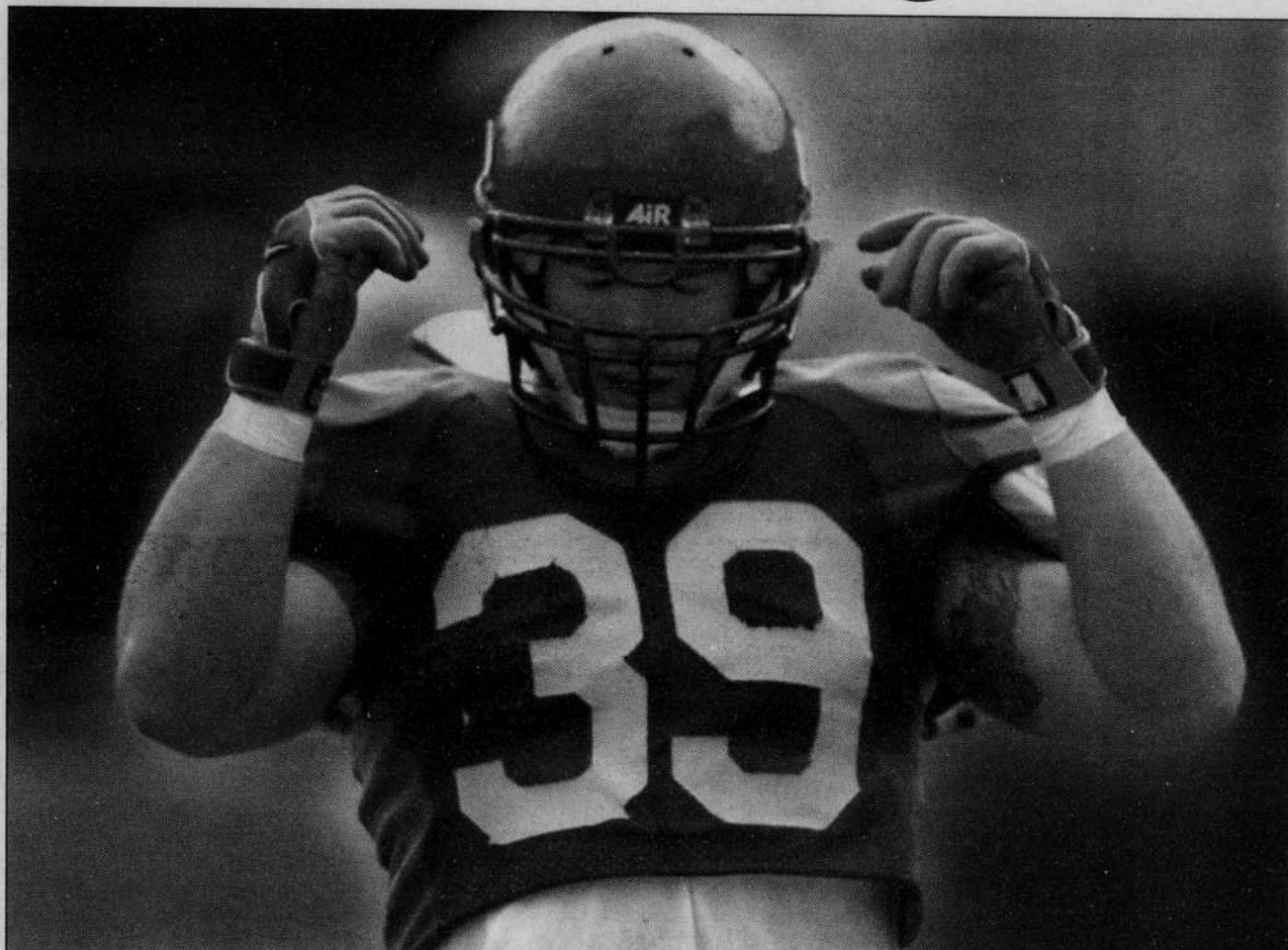
"The linebackers are coming around rapidly," Matson said. "I think we're going to be all right. Kevin's going to really help us out, and a lot of the guys are young. It's interesting to see how they've matured."

Against the Oregon offense at the team's third scrimmage last week, the group held the running game down for the first half. The second stanza was a different story, but overall, it was a step up from the first two weeks of the spring.

Mitchell had an especially impressive performance in the workout, considering he grabbed one interception in limited work in his first chance this spring to hit people. He had been out the first two weeks because of arthroscopic knee surgery in January.

"I'm feeling all right," he said at Tuesday's practice. "It felt good (to get back on the field). I was actually getting bored, and it's good to get back into the swing of things."

He said he doesn't know how much he will play in Saturday's spring game. That decision will come at the hands of head coach Mike Bellotti and his coaching staff.



Adam Amato Emerald

Kevin Mitchell had an interception in Friday's scrimmage, and now he's looking to lead a talented linebacker crew into Friday's spring game.

## That's spring for you

Oregon is stretching out its spring practices longer than most Pacific-10 Conference programs.

Two teams, Washington State and Arizona, closed out their workouts last week, albeit in different ways.

The Cougars ended their spring gridiron workouts with their traditional Crimson and Gray Game on Saturday at Martin Sta-

dium. The Crimson group won 36-3 against its lesser-talented opponents, but may have shown that Washington State has not dropped off much, if at all, from the team that went to the Rose Bowl last year.

"I think we showed today that we have pretty good depth," first-year head coach Bill Doba said.

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## Willis catches Track Town-itis

The former Duck receiver was signed by the Seahawks after the NFL Draft on Sunday, but he's found a new love on the track and wants to return to score a Pac-10 time

### Men's track and field notes

**Peter Hockaday**  
Sports Editor

Jason Willis will head to the Seattle Seahawks minicamp this weekend as a football player. But he said his recent experiences on the track might just help him stay in Seattle.

The senior and former wide receiver for the Oregon football squad ran in the Pepsi Invitational earlier this month as a fill-in. But he ended up exploding, finishing third in the 100-meter dash and second in the 200. He did it again at last weekend's Oregon Invitational, finishing third in the 200 with a time that almost qualified him for the Pacific-10 Conference Championships and helping the Duck 4x100 relay team to an almost-Pac-10 time in that event.

But on Sunday, Willis focused on football and the NFL Draft, and finally he got a phone call from the Seahawks, who didn't draft him but signed him to a free agent contract. He reports to minicamp Thursday.

"(Track) is definitely going to help me stay in shape, help me for this weekend," Willis said. "Receivers are running all the time. Track's helped me with my endurance, and definitely with my speed."

Willis said that despite his focus on performing well for the Seahawks, the track bug has burrowed deep in his skin. Now he wants to qualify for the Pac-10s in the 200, which was his specialty in high school. His time, 21.65 seconds, from the Invitational is .21 seconds slower than the Pac-10 qualifying time. He'll have only one chance to qualify as there is only one week-end between the minicamp and Pac-10s.

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## LaVoie rises, but Ducks fall on second day

Freshman Gregg LaVoie ascends the leaderboard as the Ducks drop one spot at Pac-10s in California

### Men's golf

**Scott Archer**

Freelance Sports Reporter

With three rounds down in the 2003 Pacific-10 Conference Championships, Oregon found itself in a position it didn't want to be on Tuesday: worse than the day before.

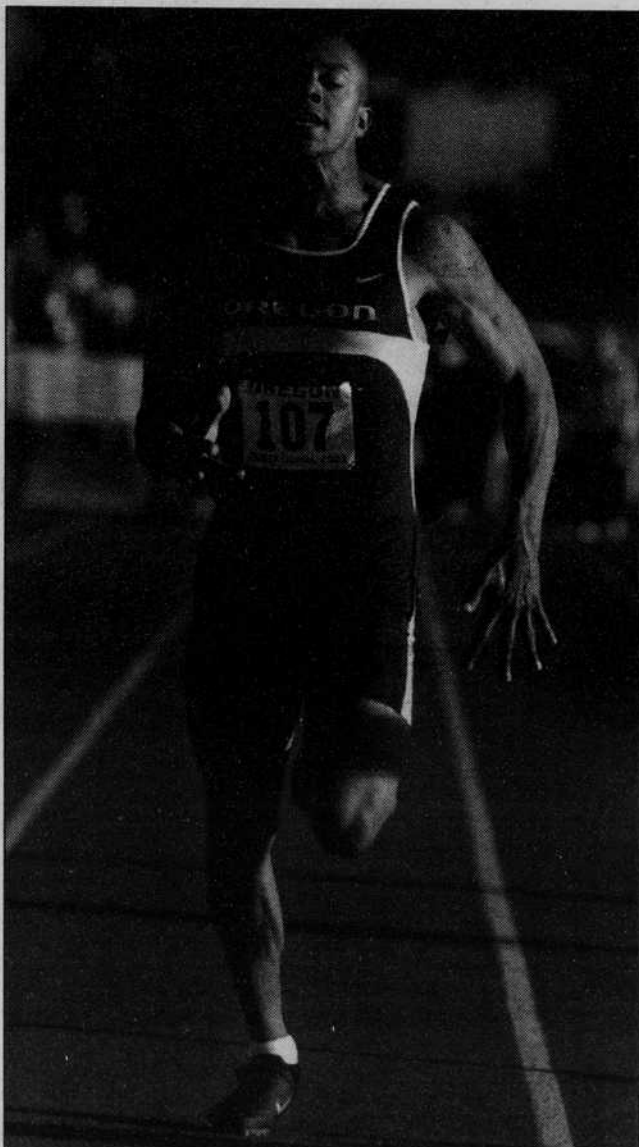
The Ducks slipped one spot to seventh place after finishing the third round 48 over par at the 6,736-yard, par-72 Oakmont Country Club in Glendale, Calif. Oregon currently has a team score of 1,128, 47 strokes behind third-round leader No. 11 UCLA.

The only surprise for the day was freshman Gregg LaVoie's impressive rise up the leaderboard. The freshman had started the day tied for 25th overall, but rode a one-over-par 73 to climb six spots on the day. LaVoie is tied with fellow teammate and senior John Ellis, who also had a major move on the day, but in the wrong direction. After an impressive two opening rounds on Monday, which placed the senior in a tie for 12th place, Ellis struggled with a 4-over 76 to slide seven spots.

Junior Jimmy White shot a 2-under-par 70 to finish the day tied at 21st overall, followed by senior Chris Carnahan at 28th overall. Redshirt freshman Kyle Johnson is currently tied for 40th overall, after shooting a third round 6-over, while junior Mike Sica shot a 9-over par, raising his three round total to 241.

No. 11 UCLA remained the team to beat Tuesday after posting a 5-under par third round, separating itself from the rest of the field. UCLA is also playing on one of its

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Danielle Hickey Emerald

Jason Willis almost notched a Pac-10 qualifying time at the Invitational.