

Ducks leading Ducks

Oregon's head-coaching ranks feature five Duck alumni who returned to coach at their alma mater

Mindi Rice
Sports Reporter

Coaching at their alma mater is a goal for many coaches.

Five former Ducks are lucky enough to have reached that goal.

"It's really special," men's head basketball coach Ernie Kent told the Emerald last year, regarding both head basketball coaches being Oregon alumni. "There may not be another program in the country that can say that. I think that speaks volumes about the University of Oregon."

Kent and women's basketball head coach Bev Smith are two of Oregon's coaches who have returned to the place they once called home as a student.

Chuck Kearney, the wrestling head coach, is another Duck alumnus, as well as golf head coaches Steve Nosler and Shannon Rouillard.

Rouillard is the most recent athlete-turned-coach, golfing for the Ducks from 1990-1995. She started as a walk-on in 1990 and finished her senior season with a No. 29 finish at the NCAA Championships.

She played for two coaches during her time as a Duck and took over coaching duties from her first coach who had returned to the helm.

At the other end of the spectrum, Nosler is the coach most removed from his playing days at Oregon. He joined the golf team during his freshman year in 1955.

After seven and a half years in the Army, Nosler returned to his home of Eugene to begin working in the Oregon golf community. He began

his head coaching duties in 1993, earning the Pacific-10 Conference Coach of the Year award in 1997.

Kearney is the next most-recent graduate after Rouillard. The 2002-03 wrestling season marked Kearney's fifth season leading the Ducks.

After two seasons as a wrestler at Oklahoma State, Kearney transferred to Oregon and won 60 matches in his junior and senior seasons.

When Kearney took the position at Oregon, he replaced long-time coach Ron Finley. Kearney worked as an assistant coach under Finley, as well as wrestling for a Finley-led squad for two years.

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Ernie Kent
men's head basketball coach

On the basketball court, Kent and Smith missed each other by one season. On the sideline, however, they've spent two seasons leading the Oregon squads simultaneously.

"It means a lot to me to have people come up to me on the street and tell me this is the best basketball team they've ever seen at Oregon," said Kent, a former Kamikaze Kid who played from 1973-1977. "That tells me we're doing something special, and I've always wanted to make this program the best it's ever been."

After college, Kent was the freshman coach at Oregon before moving to Saudi Arabia for seven years. While there, he coached a club team and worked for an oil company.

Prior to getting the nod to lead the Duck squad and return to Eugene in 1997, Kent had six years of head coaching experience at St. Mary's in California.

Kent has made the team a family affair. Both Marcus and Jordan Kent, Ernie Kent's two sons, are involved with the Ducks' team.

"It allows you to handle pressure, coaching at your alma mater," Kent said. "You have such a personal relationship with the job and your community. No. 1, I don't want to let my family down, but I also don't want to let this community down."

Smith, a two-time All-American in her time as a Duck, came from Canada to play for Oregon in 1978.

She then returned from Canada to coach for Oregon in 2001.

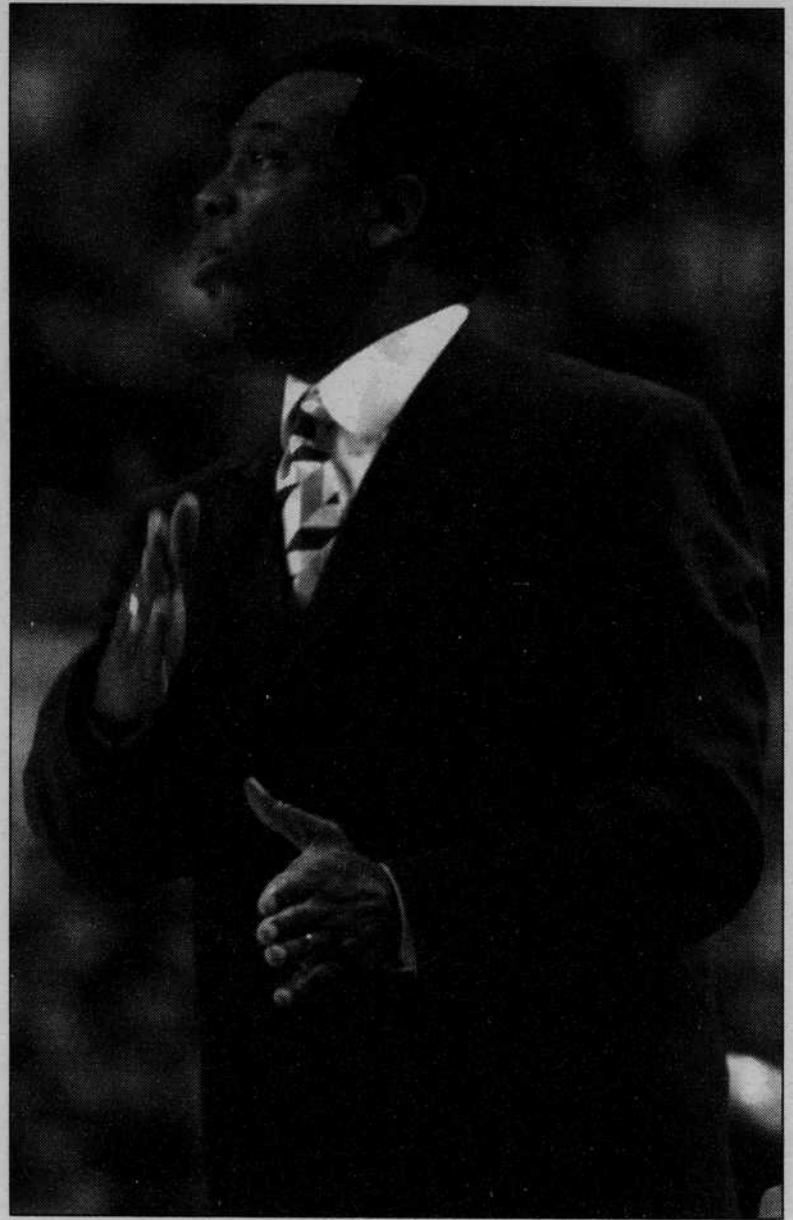
"I don't have a lot of memories of wins and losses; I just remember that our team, playing at home at Mac Court, was ready and willing to do anything to defend Mac Court and win," Smith said about her days as a player.

She played for the Canadian National Team and in the Italian league after graduating from Oregon in 1982.

"As a player, you don't realize the teaching and the learning process that you have to provide for your athletes," Smith said.

Five Oregon coaches had to learn the process, but, luckily for their squads, they didn't have to relearn the system they once played.

Contact the sports reporter at mindirice@dailyemerald.com.



Adam Amato Emerald

Ernie Kent was a member of the Kamikaze Kids, and now leads his former team.

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