

Sports Section Editor:  
Jesse Thomas  
jessethomas@dailymerald.com

Monday, September 22, 2003



**Hank Hager**  
Behind the dish

## New Mac illustrates success

Look for a symbol of Oregon's success on the University campus.

Go ahead, I dare you. I bet you won't find it. And you won't find it because it can't be found.

It can't be found on the field of Autzen Stadium or on the hardwood floors of McArthur Court. It's not the new thunder and green uniforms the Ducks are wearing (OK, so green and yellow). And you won't even find it in the Casanova Center.

Oregon's symbol of success doesn't even have a physical foundation yet.

The Ducks' greatest symbol of the steps the program has taken is the unbuilt arena, which will replace one of the oldest gymnasiums in the nation.

Honestly, five years ago, who would have thought McArthur Court would ever be replaced?

Duck basketball hadn't reached the NCAA Tournament plateau in consecutive seasons since most of our parents were in elementary school. Duck football had seen some successful seasons, but were still close enough to the lean years to know that success was still just a smoke screen.

But now Oregon is in the mainstream, a power player in the grand scheme of Division I athletics. And since college sports have an ever-growing appeal to advertisers, television executives and just about anybody that breathes in this nation, the Ducks are up there.

So that's why the proposed \$90 million to \$130 million arena is a symbol of success, a true reflection of Oregon's desire to remain above the have-nots of collegiate sports.

Athletic Director Bill Moos has taken the Ducks to the next step since his appointment in 1995, sparing no expense to make Oregon a household name. Who can forget the Joey Harrington billboard, or the subsequent one in Los Angeles, seemingly taunting USC and UCLA?

This is just the next step. A way to prove to everyone else that the Ducks are serious.

The new arena is a symbol of everything that has been going right with Oregon athletics in the past five seasons.

When California remodeled its fabled facility, fans piled in like there was no tomorrow, recruits began using the Golden Bears as a stepping stone and the program didn't have to use former Cal star Jason Kidd as a prime selling tool.

Maryland just moved into a new place, and while they didn't win the national championship again, the Terrapins will now be in the forefront for years to come.

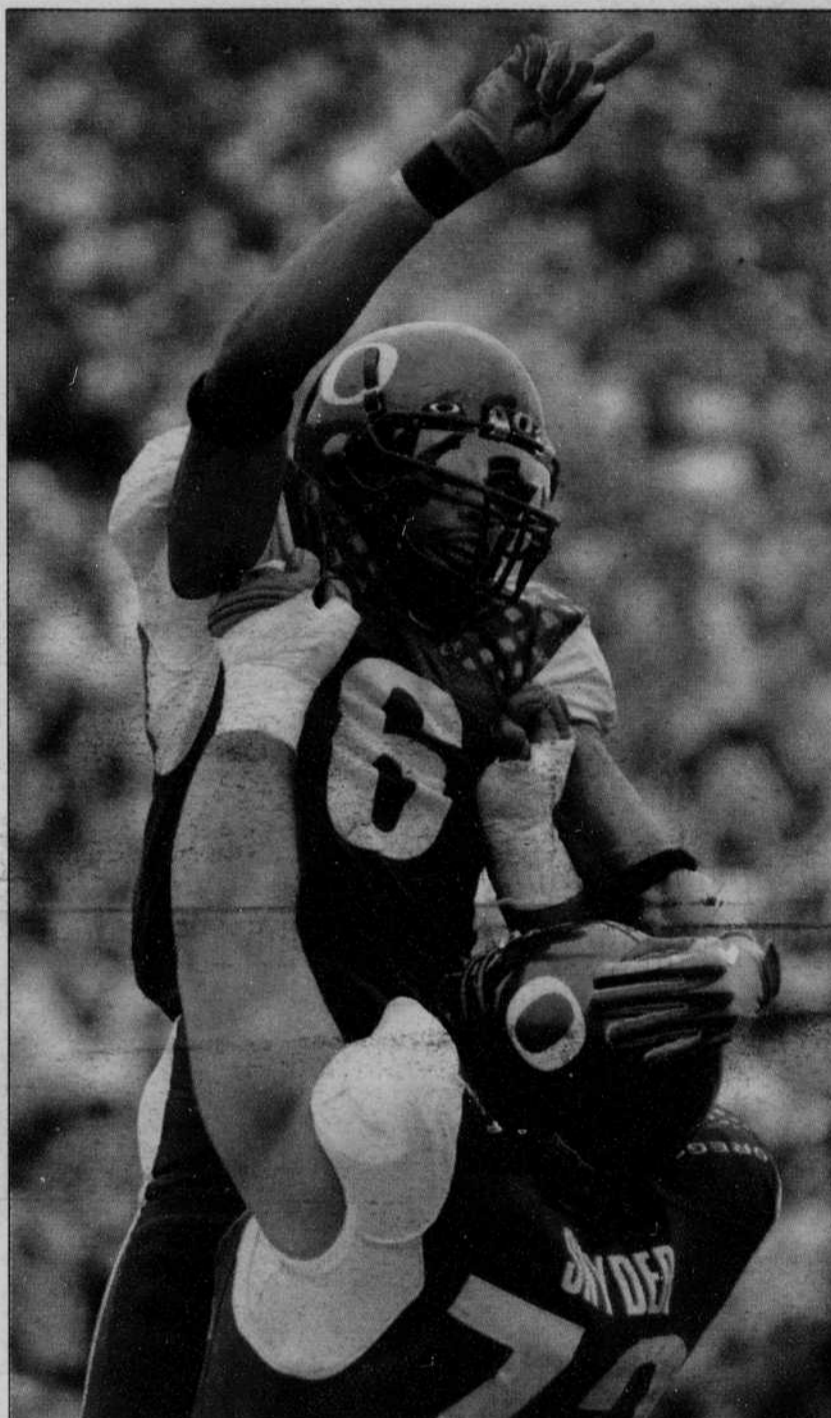
Now imagine Oregon in that scenario. The Ducks sell out a majority of their games and ride the fan enthusiasm all the way to the NCAA Tournament.

And unlike a few years ago, that might not be a fluke.

Duck basketball will reap the benefits of years of success, first started by football, and now being passed on to their own. What the Oregon fans have seen is an unprecedented string of years where the

Turn to **HAGER**, page 15E

# 'It feels like 2003'



Mark McCambridge Senior photographer

Offensive tackle Adam Snyder hoists wide receiver Demetrius Williams into the air after a touchdown in Oregon's first home win over Nevada, 31-23.

A 3-0 start to the 2003 season has the Ducks in the driver's seat and looking like the team of old, but the heart of the schedule is on its way

By **Hank Hager**  
Sports Editor

You'll have to pardon Oregon football fans if they did a double take after the first three games this season.

The Ducks (3-0 overall, 1-0 Pacific-10 Conference as of Sept. 19) are looking quite a bit like the Oregon of old.

But the big question is, what team of old?

Is it the Ducks of 2001, where they went 11-1 and finished No. 2 in the country? Or is it Oregon of last season, where a 6-0 start gave way to a 1-6 finish, including a loss at the Seattle Bowl?

The best bet is somewhere in between the two, where eight or nine wins help separate the Ducks from the middle of the Pac-10. After three games, that seems like a likely number.

"It feels like 2003," sophomore quarterback Kellen Clemens said. "Only half the team was here for the 2001 season, and some of the guys weren't here for the 2002 season. We've learned a lot from each of those two seasons — the veteran guys that were here — and we're just taking this one game at a time."

"We're treating this as the 2003 season. We try not to look back on either of those two seasons."

Two things are for sure: It is a different Oregon team from the one that went 7-6 last season, and much has changed the team that finished the 2001 season ranked No. 2 in the nation.

For one, consistency at the quarterback and running back positions plagued the Ducks entering fall workouts. Would it be Clemens or Jason Fife behind center, and who would replace Onterio Smith as the featured runner?

Better yet, would the secondary be able to bounce back from a horrendous year?

For some, those questions still remain. For others, they've been answered after the Ducks defeated Mississippi State, Nevada and Arizona in consecutive weeks.

Regardless of the belief that 2001 was a season of its own, the Ducks do have one main characteristic they enjoyed that season: chemistry.

"I think we're a lot more together as a unit, a lot more leadership," senior cornerback Steven Moore said. "I compare it to 11-1 because we had a lot of leaders."

Averaging 40.3 points per game through the first three, the Ducks proved it really doesn't matter — at least at that point — who sits behind center. Clemens started each of the first three, but Fife came on as a more than adequate substitute each game.

When Clemens became inconsistent against the Wildcats, Fife came in and took advantage of the Arizona defense. That, of course, gave Clemens the chance to regroup and he worked more magic when he came back in.

"Jason and I are just trusting the coaches to make that call," Clemens said. "I started the first three games, but I struggled early

Turn to **FOOTBALL**, page 19E

## DUCK FOOTBALL

## Ducks face easy Pac-10 home schedule

Oregon's Pac-10 schedule has four home games, including a homecoming rematch against Stanford, the 2001 upset specialist

By **Mindi Rice**  
Senior Sports Reporter

Players and coaches nationwide fear visits to Autzen Stadium because of its reputation as being one of college football's loudest venues.

The Ducks will host four Pacific-10 Conference teams at Autzen this season, including Washington State, a team the Ducks haven't hosted since 1999.

It has also been four seasons since the Ducks have made the trip to play Washington at Husky Stadium.

"I'm excited to go to somewhere new and play," linebacker Kevin Mitchell said about traveling to Seattle.

Conference play began with Oregon's Sept. 13 win against Arizona. The 48-10 victory was the Ducks' third consecutive trip to Tucson, Ariz., and the third win in as many years.

The Ducks continue conference play Saturday as they host Washington State. Oregon has won four of the last five against the Cougars, having lost in 2002 in Pullman.

After the last non-conference game of the season on Oct. 3 at Utah, the Ducks resume Pac-10 play with a trip to Tempe to



Adam Amato Photographer

Running back Terrence Whitehead has stepped up so far in replacing former star Onterio Smith.

Turn to **OREGON**, page 17E