

WINNING *blood*

For three Oregon players, the culture of winning has followed them from high school to the Ducks

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

When Demetrius Williams sat on the Oregon sideline Oct. 20, 2001, he was witnessing something he had not seen for more than five years.

The Ducks had just lost to Stanford, 49-42, and Williams, who was redshirting the 2001 season, had just lost his first football game since before his time at De La Salle High School.

"It felt weird, losing, but if you continue playing any type of sport, it's just going to happen," the redshirt sophomore said. "It hurt, but we had to move on, and I think it made me better in that I wanted to work hard so I wouldn't lose again."

You see, Williams and two other Ducks, linebacker David Martin and cornerback Charles Favroth, grew up in a winning culture. Each was a student at De La Salle — an all-boys high school in Concord, Calif. — that has not lost a game since late in the 1991 season. Entering the 2003 season, that's 11 years, or 138 straight games.

"I met a lot of friends from that team who I will probably be friends with for the rest of my life," Williams said. "The coaches were great. There's just no other program like it."

The program, which has won more championships for head coach Bob Ladouceur (16) than the number of games he has lost (14) since he took it over in 1979, is a funnel for Division I college football. The Ducks are a prime beneficiary of that funnel.

Oregon's trio of former Spartans have made an impact on the Duck program. Williams starts at the wide receiver position opposite senior Sammie Parker, while Martin, when eligible — he sat out the first two games of the season due to academic probation — is a valuable component of Oregon's linebacking core.

Favroth, meanwhile, didn't play in the first two games of the season, but part of Oregon's depth in the secondary.

The former Spartans credit their time in the Bay Area as a chance to build character, to learn what it takes to succeed in a post-high school life and to have fun playing competitive football.

That's a set of compliments De La Salle takes personally and seriously.

"Our athletes are more committed and dedicated than the average high school athlete," said Terry Eidson, the athletics director at De La Salle as well as an assistant football coach. "We're always asking the kids to excel at whatever they do."

The Ducks have a connection with the coaching brass as well. Joe Aliotti, an assistant with the Spartans since 1998, is the brother of Oregon defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti.

Make no mistake: The Ducks won't necessarily recruit a player just because he hails from De La Salle. But hey, they've got some connections with such a prolific program. It wouldn't hurt to take a look at certain players.

The Ducks almost got another De La Salle product after last season, but running back Maurice Drew decided to attend UCLA instead.

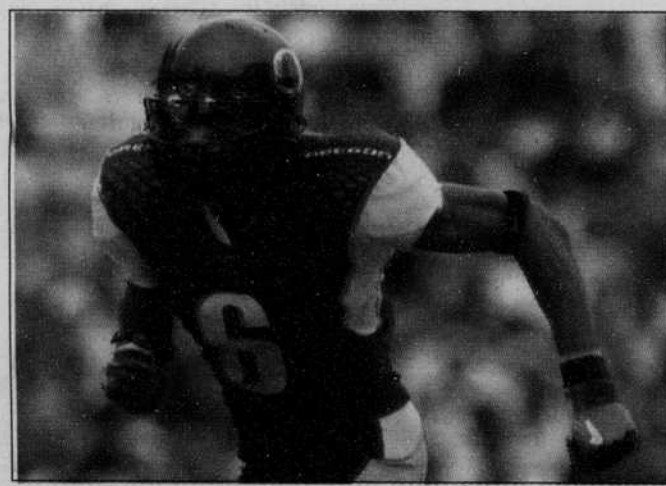
"They are still a high-profile school where they get a lot of people over there to recruit, and Joe helps us in keeping our name in front of (the players), but ultimately the kid has got to like it and want to come up here," Nick Aliotti said. "It certainly gives us a step up. I've got a pretty good pipeline."

As a school of approximately 1,100 students, De La Salle competes across the state of California, and last season traveled to Hawaii. The school is considered an independent, much like Notre Dame, and can play anyone it chooses. Often times, the Spartans will play near their campus, which is located about 30 miles from San Francisco, but will travel if need be.

For instance, a proposed trip to New Jersey to play No. 6 Don Bosco Prep was shelved because the latter was unable to schedule a



Cornerback Charles Favroth (left), wide receiver Demetrius Williams (center) and outside linebacker David Martin all came to the Ducks out of De La Salle High School of Concord, Calif. The legacy of De La Salle is known to many with a 138-game winning streak over the past 11 seasons.



Wide receiver Demetrius Williams became Oregon's playmaker against Arizona after Sammie Parker went down with an ankle injury.

game against a non-league opponent. Now, the Spartans will play No. 2 Evangel Christian of Louisiana on Oct. 24 at a nearby junior college. The game will be the first nationally televised high school game in history when it hits the airwaves on ESPN2.

The travel can be excessive for high school athletes, but the mentality that it prepares players for the collegiate level is a growing reality. "It was crazy for us," Martin said. "People said we didn't play any-

body, but we traveled. We played whoever and didn't back down. We dominated everyone we played."

As a tradition, Ladouceur and his assistants put the team's players through 6:30 a.m. workouts that begin in early January. Eidson said they are a combination of weight lifting and agility drills designed to keep the players in top off-season shape. He also advises college-bound players to participate in hopes of staving off laziness.

No matter what the workouts are designed to do, the players say they certainly help prepare the team's top players for play at the Division I collegiate level.

"Our program was at an excellent level," Williams said. "Everything out there was just preparing you for here. I had a better mindset than more freshmen who came in with me."

"It's intense, it takes a lot of your time and it takes a lot of focus, but it's well worth it."

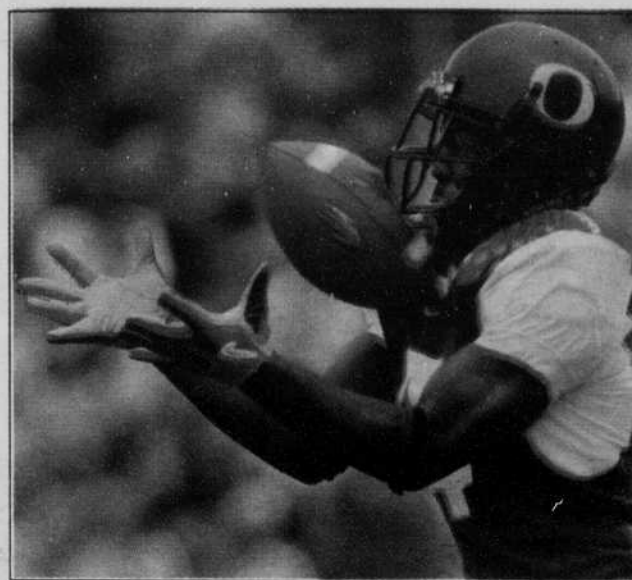
When Williams mentions he has lifelong friends from the program and can check their progress in the sports pages, he's not joking. Twelve former Spartans dot the rosters of Pacific-10 Conference teams — six programs overall — this season, while schools such as Miami, Michigan and Tennessee also feature former De La Salle players.

For Williams, Martin and Favroth, De La Salle represents a portion of their lives where they worked hard to keep a streak intact. For most Spartans, high school football represents their last time on the gridiron as college football is a pipe dream.

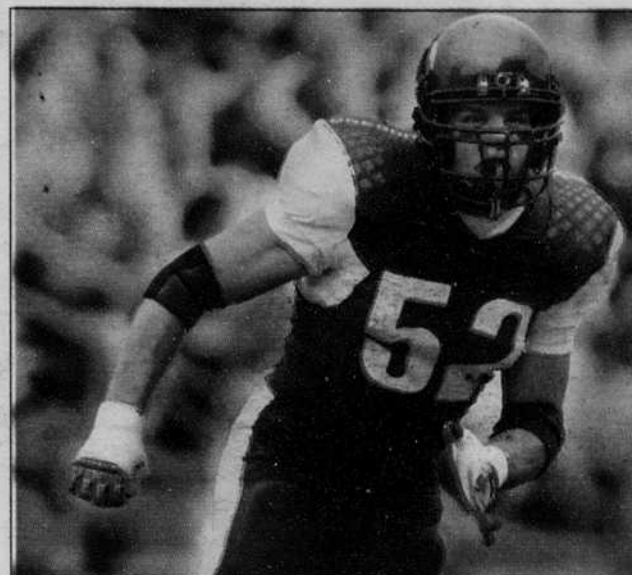
For the Oregon trio, their days are far from numbered. They just want to go out and prove themselves.

But, of course, they won't forget their time as Spartans.

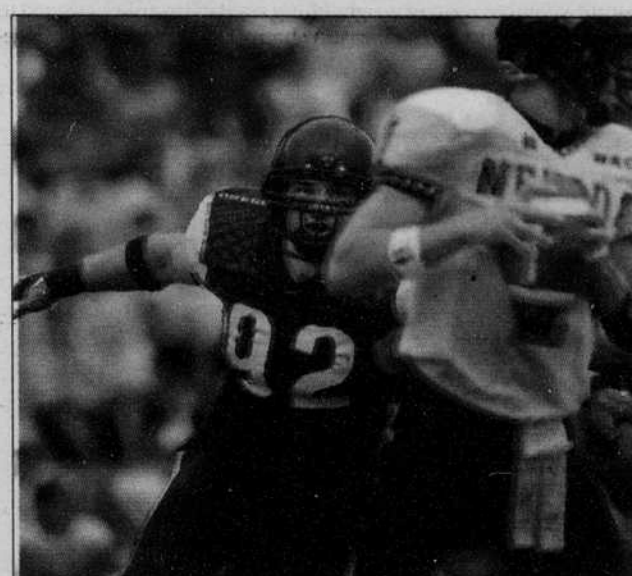
Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.



Cornerback Steven Moore will be a pinnacle starter for Oregon on defense.



Junior Jerry Matson will be one of many Oregon linebackers that will look to learn from veteran Kevin Mitchell in assisting Oregon's defense.



Defensive end Devan Long will need to provide extra help to Oregon's defensive line this season after the loss of defensive tackle Haloti Ngata.

Brotherly defense has been key to Oregon's new success

The Ducks' tight-knit defense has helped Oregon on and off the field with a camaraderie that works just like family

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

Oregon's defense throws hard hits and tough landings on the field.

Off the field, the guys are a group of college students as close as family.

"We all hang out and kick it with each other," defensive tackle Robby Valenzuela said. "We're a pretty tight-knit group."

The guys are so close that when defensive tackle Haloti Ngata injured his anterior cruciate and medial collateral ligaments in the first game of the season, the defense knew it had its work cut out.

"Losing Haloti was hard," defensive tackle Igor Olshansky said. "Everybody stepped up and picked up the slack successfully."

There are six returning starters to the Oregon defense including veterans Olshansky and linebacker Kevin Mitchell. Ngata was one of those six.

"They all love each other so much," quarterback Jason Fife said. "When they're out there it's like they're playing for each other as much as they're playing for themselves. I think they've done it in honor of (Ngata)."

The injuries to Ngata were first thought to only take him out for four to six weeks, but the decision was made to have surgery to speed up the healing process. The surgery will end Ngata's season, but Oregon plans to apply for a hardship waiver for a medical redshirt year.

"All in all, I think we're a close defensive group and I think we should be OK," Mitchell said about Ngata's injury. "It's been tough. It's just a sad thing to see, but it happens in this game. (Valenzuela), Matt Toeaina, (Olshansky) and Devan (Long) — everyone's just stepped up and filled in the gaps. You can't replace Haloti — I don't know if we've really missed a beat but we've sure missed him."

Long is one of those on the defensive line who has helped pick up the slack. He comes from limited playing time in his freshman season to three successful games as a sophomore. The defensive end has 5.5 tackles totaling 21 yards lost, including three sacks for a loss of 18 yards. Long is also credited with breaking up two passes.

Defensive tackle Junior Siavii also has seen increased playing time as well as improvement in his numbers. Siavii has two tackles for a loss of 12 yards, including one sack for 11 yards lost.

Mitchell, who has started since his fresh-



Defensive tackle Robby Valenzuela continues his job with a blow to Nevada in Oregon's home opener.

man year, leads the defense with 15 total tackles.

"Kevin Mitchell really makes a difference in the backfield," Olshansky said. "He's a veteran out there, helping us out and getting us fired up."

The veterans are doing their part as leaders, but the guys who haven't had much playing time — such as Long, Valenzuela and Siavii — are the players making the difference. The hole left by Ngata and the gaps left by graduated seniors are being

"Kevin Mitchell really makes a difference in the backfield. He's a veteran out there, helping us out and getting us fired up."

Igor Olshansky
Oregon defensive tackle

filled in the games, when it matters most.

"The way I look at it is that we've got the players right now who can make the game," Mitchell said. "We've got a lot of guys back from injuries and we've got returners back from last year who have played major roles."

Another returning starter on the defense is Keith Lewis. The free safety has 14 total tackles and two interceptions.

Rover Marley Tucker and free safety Justin Phinisee both have 14 total tackles as well. Phinisee also has a sack for a loss of five yards while Tucker has a sack for a loss of 10 yards.

With 158 total tackles, the defense is hitting its opponents hard. A few of the hits have even made early-season highlight clips.

Off the field, the business wears away and the guys go back to being college students who just happen to play football.

"We hang out and all that stuff," Valenzuela said. "So we have a better feel for each other and we trust each other a lot more than last year because everyone didn't get along as well. This year we're more of a unit."

The defense has already played crucial parts in the season — Mitchell attests that the defensive line won the Arizona game on the defensive side for Oregon — and with the Pac-10 schedule coming into full view, they have their work cut out for them.

"We knew from the get-go that our offensive line and defensive line were the basis of this team — just the strength and camaraderie," Fife said. "It all starts with them and just seeing both of the squads get better every game, it's great."

Contact the senior sports reporter at mindirice@dailyemerald.com.

Southern Cal picked to win Pac-10; Oregon, Washington place in top half

Pac-10 football is in for big changes: all the new-to-you coaches and no clear finishes following the Trojans

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

The 2002 football season featured many surprises for the Pacific-10 Conference, but the surprise for the 2003 season is there is no clear-cut way to rank the conference beyond USC winning it. The only team that has lived up — or down — to its hype is USC, which was 3-0 and ranked No. 4 nationally after three weeks of play.

Oregon has had success with a quarterback-committee system, while the Pac-10's four first-year coaches have at least one win and one loss each.

And there are still four teams that haven't been mentioned.

Without further ado, here are some Pac-10 predictions for the 2003 season with results through Sept. 15.

1. USC (2002 record: 11-2, 2003: 3-0)

The Trojans are everyone's pick to win the Pac-10, as well as a candidate for the Sugar Bowl.

The loss of Carson Palmer, the 2002 Heisman Trophy winner, has gone somewhat unnoticed as Matt Leinart has been flawless.

That offense, which averaged 35.8 points per game, has picked things up to average 39.7 points per game through the Trojans' first three wins.

At the helm for USC is third-year coach Pete Carroll, who brought NFL experience into Los Angeles with positive results.

2. Arizona State (8-6, 2-0)

The Sun Devils have their conference test when they host the Trojans on Oct. 4, but if anyone in the Pac-10 is up to the challenge, it's Arizona State.

With two non-conference wins and the Pac-10's No. 2-rated quarterback, Andrew Walter, the Sun Devils can't sneak up on teams this season.

Coach Dirk Koetter joins USC's Carroll and Arizona's John Mackovic as the conference's big dogs behind Oregon's Mike Bellotti.

3. Washington State (10-3, 2-1)

A priceless Cougar team has little change on the coaching front other than Bill Doba moving into the top spot.

Quarterback Matt Kegel, who has accounted 692 yards in three games, has stepped in to fill the hole left by Jason Gesser.

Luckily for Washington State, Doba has many returning players to work with and the 29-26 overtime loss to Notre Dame on Sept. 6 was a closer result than expected.

4. Oregon (7-6, 3-0)

The Ducks are looking more like waterfowl every season, this time with lightning yellow uniforms.

If Oregon is going to be successful in the Pac-10, the Ducks have to stay healthy — the loss of Haloti Ngata alone is one injury too many — and stay alert. An incomplete pass here, a missed block there and that yellow is going to be shades of 2002.

Leading Oregon is Bellotti. In his ninth season, Bellotti is the dean of Pac-10 coaches as every other coach in the division was hired after 2000.

5. Washington (7-6, 1-1)

The Huskies have the scandal of the offseason in former coach Rick Neuheisel, who was fired for participating in NCAA basketball tournament pools.

Although, Washington has Heisman long shot Cody Pickett and his favorite target, Reggie Williams, but has begun the season on shaky footing. The opening loss to Ohio State may have done more hurt than good.

Now led by Keith Gilbertson, Washington has a lot of work to do to not let a last-minute coaching change and slow start shake up its plans.

6. Oregon State (8-5, 2-1)

With Mike Riley back in Beaverland after a hiatus in the NFL, things such as football games may be on the upswing for Oregon State.

Even with 16 players still on the roster from Riley's days, the majority are long gone as are the winning seasons with Dennis Erickson.

Oregon State's successes will have to wait for a season or two until Riley can weed through Erickson's recruits and put his program back together.

The Beavers' bright spots will come from junior quarterback Derek Anderson, who has more

passing yards through three games than any other Pac-10 arm, and running back Steven Jackson.

7. UCLA (8-5, 1-1)

The Bruins are quickly losing sight of what they hoped would be a successful season. Four player suspensions in two months, as well as a pattern of incomplete passes, have taken UCLA down a different road.

With first year coach Karl Dorrell, the Bruins will need a season to fix academic problems and familiarize themselves with their new coach.

8. California (7-5, 1-3)

Jeff Tedford did the unthinkable with California in 2002: He led the Golden Bears to their first winning season since 1993.

The former Oregon offensive coordinator may have to do the impossible this season, as only nine of Cal's starters return. The loss of quarterback Kyle Bolter and 1,000-yard rusher Joe Igber were the Bears' biggest losses.

Only two starters return to defense and the punter returns to take over place-kicking also, leaving plenty of holes to be filled.

9. Stanford (2-9, 1-0)

The Cardinal is the only team that could challenge Arizona for last place in the conference.

Stanford's Nov. 29 game against Notre Dame will likely end the season on a sour note for a team that returns 13 starters and plays 11 games. Only three of those 13 return to the offense, which will need help if the Cardinal wants to improve on 2002's win total.

Coach Buddy Teevens is in his second year leading Stanford with 13 years of experience.

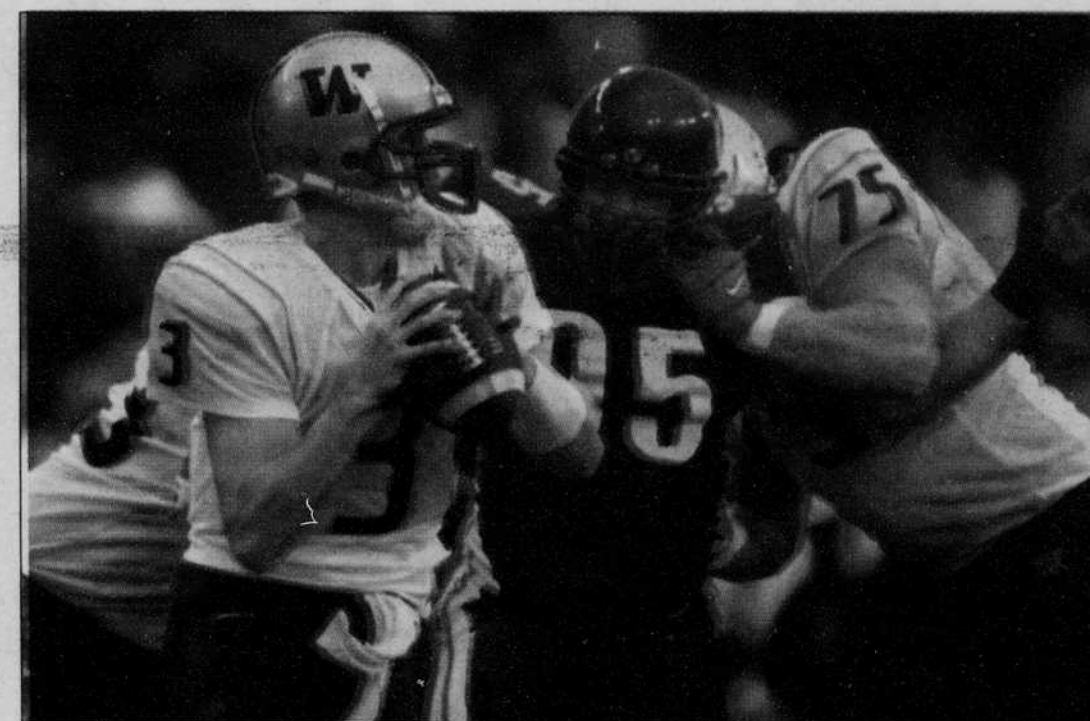
10. Arizona (4-8, 1-2)

The Wildcats appear destined for the Pac-10 cellar again this season, despite three new coordinators, a new defense and a new quarterback.

Arizona is another team that has lost its quarterback as well as an All-Pac-10 wide receiver. It may be a positive though, as Nic Costa and Ryan O'Hara should battle this year and to be in position for a starting job and Pac-10 success in 2004.

For John Mackovic, his third season at the helm will be another rebuilding year.

Contact the senior sports reporter at mindirice@dailyemerald.com.



Oregon heads to Seattle this year to play the Huskies and Heisman Trophy candidate Cody Pickett (3).