

Sports Editor:
Hank Hager
hankhager@dailymerald.com

Tuesday, September 30, 2003



Hank Hager
Behind the dish

Arizona's vacancy: The Price isn't right

The temptation is there. Oh, is it ever.

If you've read anything about John Mackovic's firing on Sunday as head coach of Arizona, then the seeds have probably been planted in your mind that Mike Price has already moved into an apartment in Tucson.

That's getting a little too far ahead of yourself.

And it's a shame that the former Washington State head coach has been so prominently mentioned. It's a shame that someone in his position could be named as the head of a program not even a year after a scandal in which his (dis)honor broke out.

Price never coached a game with Alabama; instead he lost his job after he was allegedly caught cavorting — and I say that loosely — with strippers in his spare time.

He did nothing illegal, at least in the eyes of the law. But I'm sure his wife didn't appreciate his actions and obviously neither did the Crimson Tide. The program decided to cast him aside after his indiscretions.

It is natural for Price to be mentioned as Mackovic's successor, especially since he had so much success with Washington State in the last few years he was in Pullman. After all, if a coach can get any kind of recruits to the lonely Northwest city, that's something to write home about.

And there's no doubt in my mind he would have had some kind of success with Alabama. The school plays in the Southeastern Conference, a much tougher league annually than the Pacific-10 Conference.

Regardless, he's an excellent on-the-field coach.

And yet, he would do no good for the Arizona program or the face of collegiate athletics.

To fire Mackovic at this point in the season is just plain bad timing. Granted, it's not surprising that he was let go, but a struggling team usually doesn't get much better because the general on the sidelines is removed during the season. Mike Hankwitz has tons of experience as an assistant, but is entering his first head coaching job.

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti — the dean of Pac-10 coaches, in his ninth season — questioned the timing as well.

"I don't think it's a positive day when anybody gets fired at any time, and I also think it was a little interesting that the (athletic director, Jim Livengood) said up until last week he would evaluate him at the end of the season, and that he had never fired anybody mid-season in 19 years, and then he changed his mind," Bellotti said.

Price could fill the vacant spot until the season is over, but the team would not be

Turn to **HAGER**, page 9

Offense shines in Ducks' early wins

A doubleheader and tryouts headline a busy week for Oregon

By **Mindi Rice**
Senior Sports Reporter

With a combined 28-1 rout of Western Baptist in a rare September doubleheader, Oregon softball returned to Howe Field last Friday.

The Ducks took the first game against the Warriors, 17-1, in five innings. The second game was also called after five with an 11-0 final.

"This team is a really exciting group to be around," Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "It's energized with six new players, yet we're feeling the loss of five very experienced and excellent players. But it's always fun to get a new start."

DUCK SOFTBALL

Junior Lindsey Kontra pitched three innings between the two games, earning the win after starting the second game. Kontra and senior Anissa Meashintubby each gave up two hits, while sophomore Amy Harris pitched three hitless innings.

"They've been working hard," Arendsen said. "We're all getting to know each other, kind of find out what we can do, what our depth is and who's going to play what position."

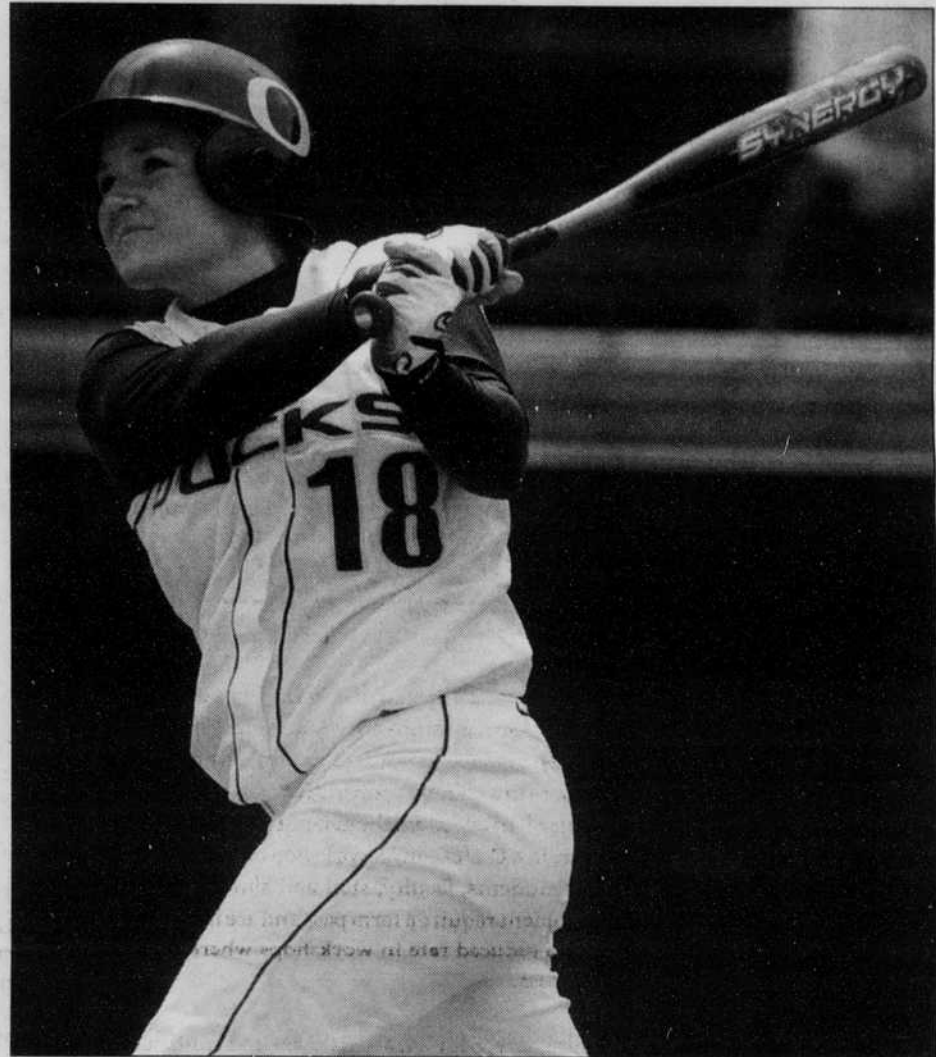
Offensively, each player who had an at-bat in the first game got at least one hit. The Ducks had 22 hits in the first game, including two home runs by senior catcher Jenn Poore.

Junior Ashley Richards went a combined 6 for 7 in the two games, while sophomore Beth Boskovich went 3 for 3, including a home run in the second contest.

The Ducks, ranked 11th in the nation in the final poll of the 2003 season, had six home runs in the doubleheader.

The two games marked the first in Western Baptist's history.

"It's an opportunity to get out and allow



Mark McCambridge Senior Photographer

Jenn Poore hit two home runs in Oregon's first game on Friday, a 17-1 win over Western Baptist.

the girls to play together in a game situation rather than always practicing," Western Baptist coach Todd Bradley said. "It's also an opportunity to see some great talent against us and to kind of put them on the measuring stick to see where we need to go."

The Warriors, an NAIA school, will be members of the Cascade Collegiate Conference, joining Southern Oregon, Eastern Oregon, Oregon Tech, Concordia and Albertson.

Turn to **SOFTBALL**, page 9

Mackovic ousted as Arizona head coach

John Mackovic posted a 10-18 record in less than three seasons

By **Hank Hager**
Sports Editor

Jim Livengood decided not to wait after all. The Arizona athletic director removed head coach John Mackovic on Sunday, just days after saying he would evaluate the embattled coach's status after the season.

"John Mackovic is a good man and a good football coach, but for whatever reason has not been a good fit for the University of Arizona football program, and that is as much my responsibility as it is his," Livengood said in a press conference. "This is not about fan unrest, it's not about Internet chat rooms and it is not about message boards. It is about players and doing everything we can to help them mature and have the experience at the UA that we need to have and they need to have going through a collegiate experience."

Mackovic's firing comes after three turbulent years at the helm of the Arizona program.

In November 2002, approximately 50 players went to university president Peter Likins to complain about Mackovic's methods as head coach. And just last Friday, 20 players were banned from a team dinner because they failed to appear for personal meetings with him.

PAC 10

Mackovic was 10-18 in three seasons with the Wildcats, including a 1-4 ledger this season. Arizona narrowly lost to TCU on Saturday, 13-10, in overtime.

"I think just a lot of things built up over time," Arizona safety Darrell Brooks told the Arizona Daily Star. "I don't think you place it on one individual incident. It's bad that it happened, but it's something that you know in this business. It's something we have to use as a motivating factor."

"John Mackovic is a good man and a good football coach, but for whatever reason has not been a good fit for the University of Arizona football program, and that is as much my responsibility as it is his."

Jim Livengood
Arizona athletic director

Defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz was named the interim head coach on Sunday, and it will be his first head coaching experience. This season is Hankwitz' first with the Wildcats after serving as defensive coordinator at Texas A&M for six seasons.

Hankwitz was unavailable for comment with the Arizona media on Sunday, but Livengood told

the Arizona Daily Star: "He is very well respected by our players and by our coaches. I don't want to infer that any of the others could not have done a good job. But in my opinion, Mike fits this position probably the best right now."

Livengood did not deny he would be looking to fill the head coaching position full-time. Former Washington State head coach Mike Price has been mentioned as a possibility, as has current Boise State head coach Dan Hawkins.

However, Hawkins is under contract and it would be extremely unlikely for him to leave his position during the season.

Cal knocks off USC ... finally

There are no more unbeaten in the Pacific-10 Conference.

In addition to Oregon's loss to Washington State, both USC and Stanford fell to California and Washington, respectively. The Golden Bears' 34-31 victory was perhaps the sweetest, especially after losing to the Trojans last season, 30-28.

"Anytime you can have success against a team like USC (it's a great accomplishment)," California head coach Jeff Tedford said. "They're a tremendous football team and it means a lot to this football program to have that kind of victory in our home stadium on national television. It's a tremendous feather in our kids' cap."

California fans stormed the field after kicker Tyler Fredrickson split the uprights in the third overtime. It even inspired a "Bedlam in

Turn to **PAC-10**, page 8