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HAGER

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decided later by the state of Oregon that the University couldn't join anyway.

All the acrimony between Knight and Oregon went away some time later. He has been involved with the program ever since.

The relationship with Knight has been criticized, especially since the Ducks were blessed with a top-of-the-line locker room recently — to put it lightly — and sparkling, yet controversial, uniforms.

It is an advantage for Oregon to have Knight at its side. What school in the country would turn away the creator of Nike? They may complain, as Jackie Sherrill of Mississippi State did, but if they were in the Ducks' sit-

uation, could they really say no?

That's not very likely, and it is why Oregon and Knight are a perfect fit.

Athletic director Bill Moos has embraced change and image since he got to Oregon in 1995, and through the way, aside from that small hiccup, Knight has been there.

Disclaimer: Before you think Knight is all about athletics, remember that the Knight Library and Knight Law Center both bear his last name. Both are state-of-the-art facilities and are revered among universities in the Northwest.

There is no surprise that Knight is at the forefront of the new arena project. He has been a fixture at Oregon sporting events since his rebirth with the University and continues to help with many facets financially.

As Moos said at Saturday's announcement, Oregon is a member of a select group of universities. The Duck programs are funded fully through the athletic department alone. There is no need to mesh academic money with athletic funds.

With Knight aboard, that distinction won't have to become blurred.

If the University appreciates what it has in the Nike creator, the sporting program at Oregon will thrive. The students and student athletes will continue to have an education that is continually ranked as a best buy.

And most of all, fans, coaches, players and recruits alike will have first-class facilities in which to play and watch.

Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailymerald.com.

DUCKS

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Oregon began by winning its first five games, the best start in school history and its longest winning streak. The Ducks went downhill from there, losing five straight.

That's the second-worst losing streak in program history. The Ducks

lost seven games in a row during the 2000 season. Oregon got out of the funk with a win over Weber State on Sunday at Papé Field.

"Oh yeah, we're starting over," Valadez said. "It's going to be just like that. We're 0-0 right now."

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailymerald.com.

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