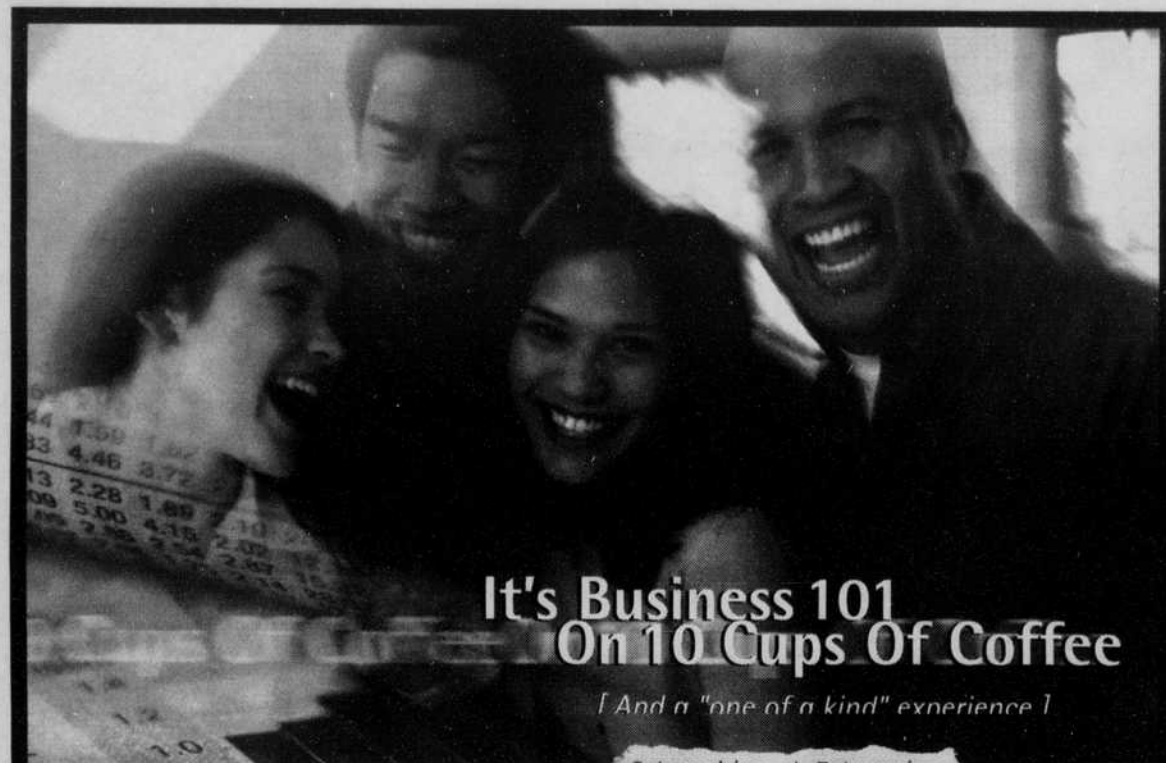




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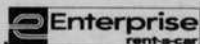
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Oregon players shake off recent Homecomings

Stanford comes to town again, and the Ducks look for a Homecoming win

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

The days of floats and dances are long gone. Kings and queens are no longer crowned in the college atmosphere. But the annual Homecoming football game is still around.

The tradition, which dates back to 1936, hasn't treated Oregon so well in the past two years. The memory of the infamous 49-42 loss to Stanford in 2001 is still fresh. USC defeated Oregon 44-33 in last year's Homecoming, the loss that began the downward spiral for Oregon through the end of December.

This year, Oregon hosts Stanford again. The Cardinal visits Autzen Stadium for the third straight year, and for the Oregon players the past is, well, in the past.

"Last year they (Stanford) came here and we got them," senior linebacker Kevin Mitchell said of Oregon's 41-14 victory last season. "This game is about us. It's not about Stanford one bit."

In the history of Homecoming games, Oregon has met Stanford three times and has never won. Prior to the 2001 defeat, the Ducks lost 33-13 to Stanford in 1991 and were blown out 41-7 in 1986.

But to the Oregon players, the fact that it is Homecoming doesn't make Saturday's game any more special.

"It means nothing," cornerback Justin Phinisee said. "It's just a chance to get back on the board for us. We're just trying to get back into the groove of things. (We're) happy it's a home game, we'll have the fans behind us."

The fans at the Homecoming games always seem a little louder, es-

pecially since Homecoming brings back alumni.

Last year's attendance at the Stanford game was 56,436, the fourth-largest number of any game last season. In 2001, more than 46,000 witnessed Oregon's loss to Stanford, which also broke Oregon's national 23-home-game winning streak at the time.

After two straight losses on the road, Oregon is excited to be home.

"It's good to be playing at home again because you get that 12th man on the field, which is the crowd at Autzen Stadium," tailback Chris Vincent said.

For Vincent, a redshirt freshman, he's not sure what to expect in what will be his first on-field performance for Homecoming. Vincent sat out last season due to transfer eligibility requirements.

"As for Homecoming, I don't know that much about Homecoming here at the school," Vincent said. "It's a little different than high school. I'm trying to find out information for myself, like what's going on, and if there's any pep rallies going on. I don't really know though, whatever they tell me basically."

The Ducks have a series record of 24-29-3 in the history of Homecoming games. Oregon has played a Homecoming game every year since 1936, with the exception of the 1943-44 season when the Ducks did not field a team during World War II. Homecoming was also disbanded between 1975-81.

"For me, it's just another game," Mitchell said. "We've lost three in a row, and even though it is Homecoming, I tend not to worry about that because I'd rather get back on track than worry about anything else right now."

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com.



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