

■ Oregon notes

Frustrated reserve QB DuRocher granted release

*After winding up third
on the depth chart,
the former prep star leaves*

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

The University announced earlier this week that third-string quarterback Johnny DuRocher was granted a conditional release to transfer from the school.

DuRocher made no indication about his future plans.

He was listed third on Oregon's depth chart at quarterback, behind Kellen Clemens and freshman Dennis Dixon and did not see any playing time in the team's first two games.

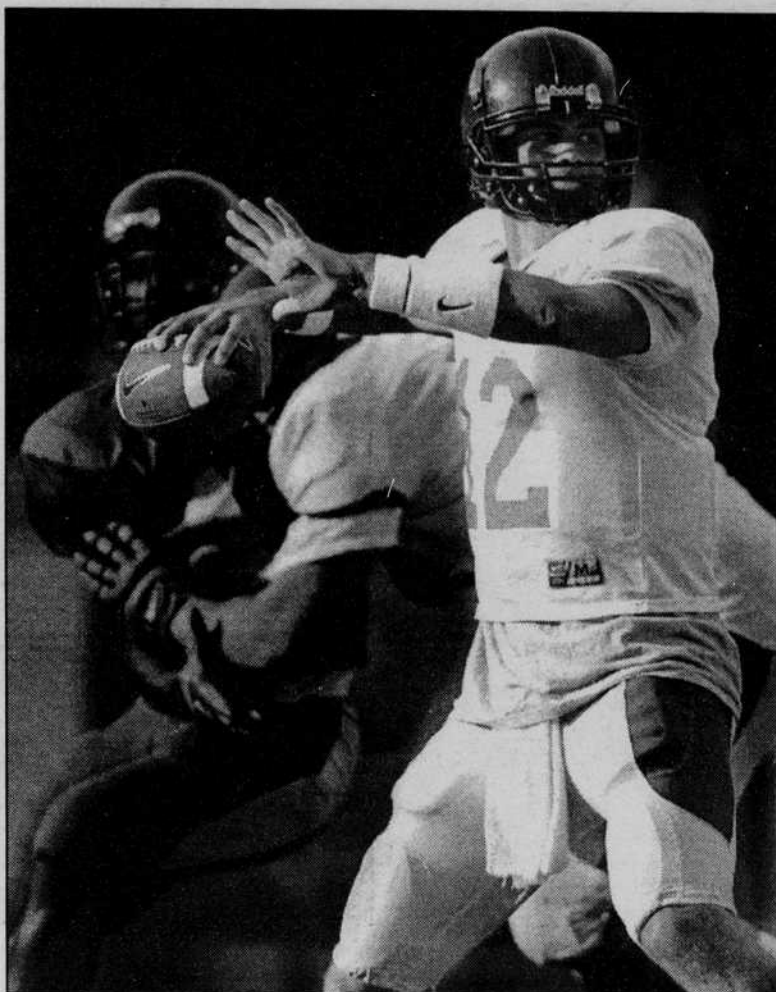
"I respect Johnny's decision and his desire to play," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said Tuesday. "I can't guarantee to him that's going to change (his status). I was very honest with him about our needs, and this is what he wanted to do, so that's that."

DuRocher's departure leaves Oregon thin and inexperienced at the position.

"We have a true freshman and a redshirt freshman backing up our junior," Bellotti said. "That in it of itself is a big concern."

According to Bellotti, freshman Brady Leaf will step into third-string duties, as well as keeping his duties as the team's scout team quarterback. Sophomore punter Drew Larson, who played quarterback in high school, might also be worked in as a scout team quarterback.

"It obviously puts us short,



ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

The future is uncertain for Oregon's former third-string quarterback Johnny DuRocher after his request to be released was granted by the University.

significantly short," Bellotti said. "It's very difficult timing for a team when you're three games into the season and to lose a person that was your backup and your third

team quarterback."

DuRocher was a top prospect from Bethel High School in Washington state. He was ranked ninth

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■ In my opinion

The painful ways sports teams build you up and let you down

I'm watching Oregon in its loss to Oklahoma last Saturday, and I'm thinking; OK, we got them third-and-long, the Duck defense will stop them this time, right? Ahhhhh! Not another first down! It was like getting poked to death with a sewing needle.

Maybe I'm overreacting, but during two touchdown drives in the decisive second and third quarters, Jason White and the Sooners converted four — that's right, four — third-and-long tries, and Duck fans everywhere felt that little vein in their forehead getting bigger and bigger.

Just when the Ducks looked like they were going to stop the mighty Oklahoma offense ... BAM! First down Oklahoma.

After the Sooners picked up two third and longs in the second quarter during Oklahoma's first touchdown drive of the game, I actually started rooting for the Sooners to get closer to the first down marker during their



CLAYTON JONES
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

first two downs so I didn't have to see another third and long.

But the trend continued, and it's almost like I knew a first down was going to happen. I don't think it would have mattered if Oregon would have dropped back all eleven players in coverage, Jason White would have found someone open.

Don't get me wrong — this column isn't a knock on the Oregon defense. In fact, barring the fourth quarter, the defense looked the best it has in a long time. It held a team that was averaging more than 50 points per

game to zero points in the first quarter and 10 in the first half. That's impressive.

I am recognizing how clutch the Oklahoma offense is on third downs. This season the Sooners have completed 66.6 percent of their third down attempts, tied for first in the country. Oregon ranks 90th in the nation in that category, completing 31 percent of its third down attempts.

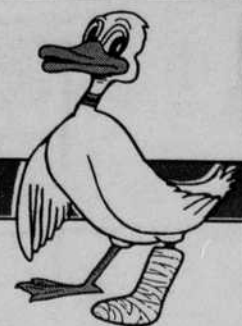
White, the 2003 Heisman winner, looks so confident and comfortable on the field it's as if he's in the backyard of his house with a Nerf football and a couple buddies playing against sixth graders, and why shouldn't he?

White should feel comfortable on the field — he has been at Oklahoma for six years. Yes six. Do you know what we call most college students who are at college for six years?

Med students.

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Now in its 13th year, Game Day is published every Friday throughout the football season and is distributed on campus, at distribution sites around Eugene and at Autzen Stadium the day of the home games. Game Day is published by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, OR. The Emerald operates independently of the UO with offices in Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union.

Oregon Daily Emerald | P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403 | www.dailyemerald.com