

■ In my opinion

Matson's tireless work ethic sets marvelous example for Ducks

As Oregon wraps up practice on a sunny Tuesday afternoon, Jerry Matson can be seen racing around the field.

The senior middle linebacker is one of the Ducks' best defensive players, but at the moment, he's not chasing down a quarterback or smashing a running back in the "A" gap.

Instead, No. 52 is sprinting down field during a special teams drill with the same passion that he displayed as a member of the scout team in 2000.

Matson's rise from hard-nosed walk-on to starting middle linebacker was a climb driven by the kind of passion that Oregon needs to turn its season around.

Despite being an All-State linebacker at Washington's Kamiak High School, Matson didn't receive any scholarship offers to his liking. While weighing his options of where to walk on, Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti helped make Matson's decision a little easier.

"It was five years ago that I watched (Matson) on film, and our



JON ROETMAN
ROUGHING THE PASSER

coaches were undecided about Jerry," Bellotti said. "He had not been offered scholarships by the schools he wanted. I watched him on film, and I watched a guy who ran very well and played with passion and I said, 'let's bring him in.'"

Matson's desire to play was evident during his first year at Oregon. The Kodiak, Alaska, native was named scout team defensive player of the week on four occasions, taking the old-school approach of a player paying his dues on the practice field before cracking the starting lineup.

Early in his career, Matson was so eager to make plays that coaches had to tell him to tune it down.

"He was actually too overanx-

ious on defense," Bellotti said. "He would overrun things because he wanted to make plays. We actually had to slow him down and train his eyes."

As Matson improved, his playing time increased. He stepped into a starting role during his junior year and finished with 81 tackles and an interception, which he returned for a touchdown against UCLA.

Being named a starter on defense only made Matson push harder. His work on special teams and countless hours in the weight room are evidence that the 6-foot-1, 225-pounder is an athlete determined to maximize his abilities.

"He's one of those guys that comes to work with a full lunch pail everyday," Bellotti said. "(He) puts in work, does extra work, never questions anything and is a great example to others."

Matson's tremendous lower-body strength — he can squat 515 pounds — provides the power needed to be one of the Pacific-10's hardest hitters. If there were any questions about

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■ Pac-10

Fighting Irish to square off against wounded Huskies

In other Pac-10 action Oregon State travels to Arizona State and Washington State visits Arizona

BY ALEX TAM
FREELANCE REPORTER

Six Pacific-10 Conference teams finally embark on their Pac-10 schedule this weekend.

After this week, only California and Oregon will have yet to begin their Pac-10 schedule.

In non-conference action, Washington travels east to South Bend, Ind. to play Notre Dame.

UCLA and California are both on a bye week.

Washington (0-2 overall, 0-1 Pac-10) at Notre Dame (2-1)

The Huskies take to the road for the first time this season and make its third-ever trip to South Bend, Ind., this Saturday.

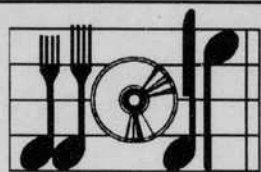
In the teams' series history, the Fighting Irish have won all four contests by an average score of 39-12. Their last meeting was in 1996, when Notre Dame won convincingly 54-20.

"It has been awhile since we have had a big road win," Washington head coach Keith Gilbertson said. "We have had some tough road trips and been to some landmark places like Miami and Notre Dame. It would be nice to win one of those games."

Washington is coming off two consecutive home losses to Fresno State and UCLA, while Notre Dame has won two in a row over Michigan and Michigan State.

Even though the Huskies have started the season 0-2, things still look

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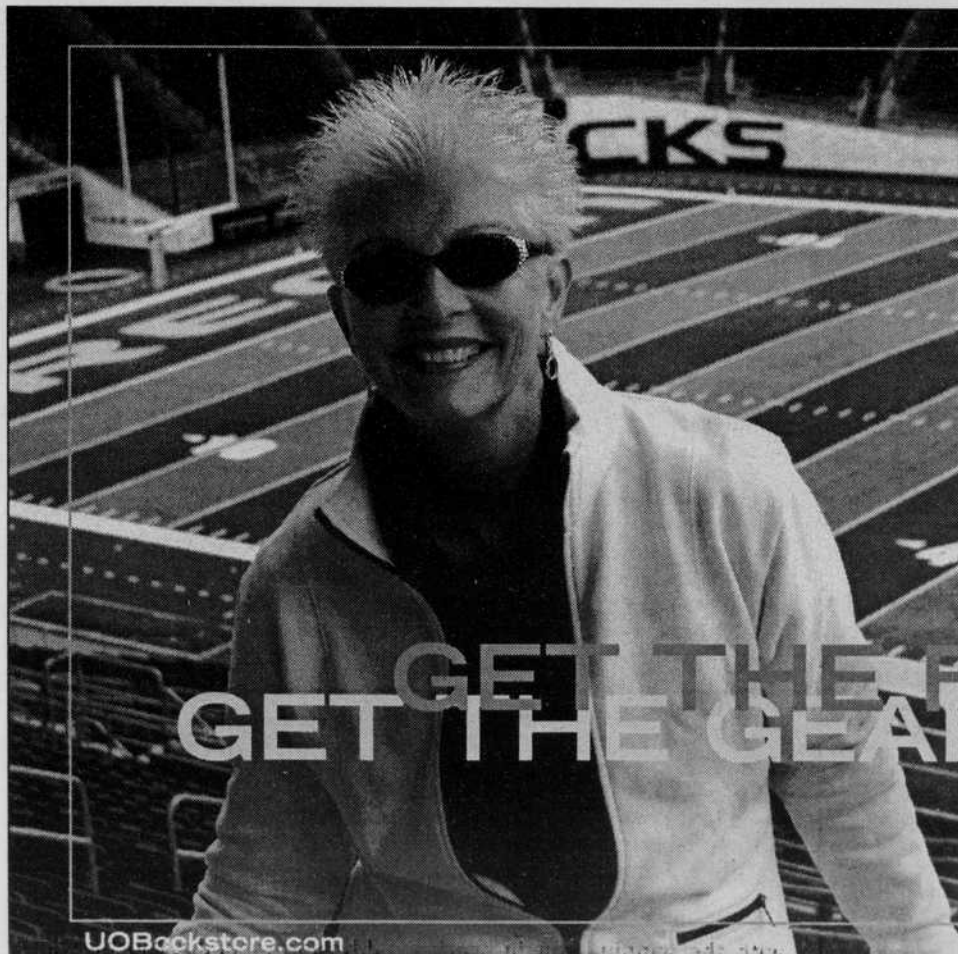


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