

"I mean, the guy had a terrible strike zone today — terrible. If the pitch is a strike, I'll tell you it's a strike. But this wasn't close."

Moises Alou | Chicago Cubs outfielder on home plate umpire Bill Miller

■ In my opinion



JON ROETMAN
ROUGHING THE PASSER

Owning a fantasy has destroyed my reality

Fantasy football has changed my life. Read that sentence again. Yes, I am pathetic.

Now that my lack of a social life has become embarrassingly evident, let me explain my love for the game of numbers.

For those of you who don't know what fantasy football is, a brief explanation goes something like this: Leagues are formed by team "owners," who build their squads with NFL players based on statistical muscle. Owners compete with one another within the league, with points being awarded for touchdowns, yards, etc.

Most of the game's excitement comes from the money wagered between owners. Some leagues cost nothing to join, providing simple, friendly competition. Others, however, cost hundreds of dollars to enter and can make the winning owner a healthy chunk of change.

Fantasy football has been around for a while, but I'm just getting my first taste of the craze. I've had several offers to join leagues in the past, but I always viewed the game as something that complicated the simple enjoyment of rooting for one's favorite team.

My stepbrother finally convinced me to join a league on Yahoo.com, where each of the 10 participants wagered \$20 on the season. In true Pete Rose fashion, I feel having a little something on the line makes a competitive event more interesting. The chance to make \$200 was too much to pass up.

On the night before our league draft, I found myself doing Internet research on successful fantasy owners and their strategies for building a great squad. Winning was all I could think about. I didn't want to go to sleep. I just wanted our league to get started.

On the night of the draft, I sat in front of my laptop 20 minutes early, armed with a pair of 20-oz. Mountain Dew and the ambition to construct the greatest fantasy football team known to man. It was truly a sad, sad day in my life.

Once I found out I owned the first pick in the draft, I started posting trade offers on the message board and acting far too excited. Hell, I might as well have been an NFL coach in a war room on draft day.

It got so bad that my stepbrother had to announce to an audience that it was my first fantasy draft and beg others to show patience with my abundant rambling.

After drafting a team led by Kansas City running back and fantasy god Priest Holmes, it was time to sit back and follow each player's success. After the NFL's opening week had passed, I realized just how fun being part of a fantasy league was. It made me follow every game even closer than before and study injury reports with extreme detail.

I won my head-to-head match-up each of the first two weeks, leading to yet another fun aspect of fantasy football: league message boards.

Fantasy message boards are home to

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■ PAC-10

Siegel cools off, Sun Devils red hot

As Pac-10 play heats up, several teams are making adjustments after the weekend

BY CLAYTON JONES
SPORTS EDITOR

In the early stages of the Pacific-10 Conference season, certain teams are staking claim that they will be serious contenders for the conference title, while others are descending to the bottom pile.

Siegel's streak snapped

Though senior kicker Jared Siegel broke Oregon's all-time scoring record Saturday, he also snapped his streak of consecutive extra points made at 98, 10 shy of the Pac-10 record.

Siegel hadn't missed a PAT since the 2002 season opener against Mississippi State.

In other Oregon news, defensive end Devan Long leads the conference with 7.5 tackles for loss this season. Linebacker Jerry Matson is fourth with six tackles for loss. The Oregon secondary looks like it might get Justin Phinisee back for the Arizona State game Saturday. He practiced in pads Monday and appeared to be healthy. The return of Phinisee will help cornerbacks Sam Hughes, Jackie Bates, Ryan Gilliam and Aaron Gipson to stop the explosive Sun Devil passing game.

Offensively, sophomore Dante Rosario scored a touchdown in his fifth consecutive game during Saturday's victory against Idaho. His 4-yard run also gave Oregon its first rushing touchdown of the season.

Arizona State's stingy D

The Sun Devils will travel to Oregon this week as one of the hottest teams in the Pac-10. Arizona State's 4-0 start is its best since going 11-0 in 1996.

In the Sun Devils' 27-18 victory over Oregon State, it held the Beavers to minus-19 yards rushing, and during the last two games, they have given up a total of 25 yards on the ground.

Arizona State's defense has also been stingy through the air, giving up one passing touchdown in four games. On the other side of ball, the Sun Devils have scored 13 of their 15 offensive touchdowns through the air.

Cal returns after two weeks

California returns to action after having a bye last week and a game against Southern Mississippi postponed due to Hurricane Ivan



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Oregon cornerback Sam Hughes attempts to make a tackle in Oregon's victory on Saturday. Hughes and the rest of the Duck secondary will benefit from the return of senior Justin Phinisee.

the previous week.

During Cal's last eight games, it has averaged 531.6 yards and 42.7 points per game. This season, Cal running back J.J. Arrington has carried the ball 16 times in each of the first two games and has amassed 678 yards.

Cal faces Oregon State Saturday, and the Golden Bears have lost their last five to the Beavers, but lead the overall series 31-25.

Oregon State looks to continue success against Cal

Oregon State has had arguably the toughest schedule in the country, and it doesn't get any easier this week as it faces No. 10 California. The Beavers are the only team to have beaten Cal the last two years.

Quarterback Derek Anderson moved up to eighth place in Pac-10 history in passing yards with 8,394. Defensively for the Beavers, middle linebacker Trent Bray leads the conference in solo tackles with 30 and is third in overall tackles with 10.5 per game.

Change at the helm

Redshirt freshman Carl Bonnell will be calling the signals for Washington on Saturday when the Huskies travel to face Stanford.

Head coach Keith Gilbertson said they are struggling offensively. Former starter Casey Paus will now be the backup.

Injuries are also forcing Gilbertson to make other changes to the offense. Washington lost receiver Corey Williams and fullback Zach Tuasosopo for the season — Williams due to a separated wrist and Tuasosopo because of a broken leg.

Surprising Stanford hopes to recover from a tough loss

Stanford nearly pulled off the upset of the year against No. 1 USC, but fell just short. Though the Cardinal didn't get the win, it proved to the rest of the Pac-10 it will be a force to be reckoned with.

Now its newly renovated offensive attack will get to prey on a weak Washington defense.

Sophomore quarterback Trent Edwards has led the offense, throwing seven touchdown passes and only one interception this season.

He has led a resurgence of the Cardinal offense as its points per game has gone up from 16.9 last season to 36.0 this season.

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■ Duck Soccer

Oregon works through injuries, tough schedule

Four of the injury-stricken Ducks' six losses have come against 2003 NCAA tournament qualifiers

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

Oregon will continue to grind its way through one of the toughest schedules in the country on Friday when Wyoming comes to Papé Field.

It will be the first home match in a month for the Ducks. The team's 2004 complete schedule includes nine NCAA tournament participants from 2003. The Ducks have already played and lost to national runner-up Connecticut, 2002 national champion Portland, Central Connecticut State and Utah.

"We want to develop our players by having a tough schedule," Oregon head coach Bill Steffan said. "We have had chances. We had chances against UConn, and we had a chance to get it to 3-3 against Portland, but the goal was called back due to an offside call."

Oregon still has to face five more postseason qualifiers — Washington, USC, Stanford, Arizona State, and last year's final four qualifier UCLA —



Emerald

Junior midfielder Cristian Higa, seen here last season against UCLA, has started in 45 of the Ducks' past 46 games. She looks to continue the trend Friday against Wyoming, during its upcoming conference schedule.

Injury update

Slowly but surely, the Ducks are returning to full strength. A plethora of spring injuries forced Oregon to cancel the rest of its spring season and has left them short-handed for the early part of 2004. All but three of the Ducks have returned — including senior defender Kelly Baird, sophomore Kaily Winther, redshirt sophomore Sabrina DeMonte, junior Katie Abrahamson, junior Mele French and redshirt sophomore Andrea Valadez.

"It hasn't given us a consistent lineup for spring or fall," Steffan said.

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