

■ In my opinion



JON ROETMAN  
ROUGHING THE PASSER

## Dark cloud hangs over Ducks after loss to Cal

It won't show up on the schedule or in the box score.

It won't be visible on gambling Web sites and won't be apparent to fans arriving at Autzen Stadium this weekend.

While Oregon's itinerary calls for a home game against UCLA Saturday, the Ducks, in actuality, will be battling two opponents.

California faces Washington in body this weekend, but the Golden Bears' mystique will hang over Oregon like an ominous storm cloud.

After all, it wasn't like Oregon was dominated by a superior team in Berkeley, Calif. Rather, the Ducks beat themselves with mistakes and not capitalizing on opportunities, falling to Cal 28-27.

"Losing a game like that, where we were confident in winning is a battle," fullback Dante Rosario said. "To lose a game like that takes a lot out of you. We know what it takes to come back and win. A lot of people think we are just going to hang our heads now and not really try to end the season the way we should. We are going to fight and end the season right"

Besides acknowledging the tough defeat, the Ducks say they've moved past last week's heartbreaking loss to the Golden Bears.

I don't believe it.

While the loss may not be a focal point this week for Oregon, it will linger in the back of every player's mind when it comes time for him to make a play.

Can I make this block?

Can I make this tackle?

Can I catch this pass?

With Oregon needing a win during its final two games to secure a bowl bid and its 11th consecutive winning season, it will be evident which Ducks are capable of handling adversity. Saturday's matchup with a much improved Bruin team will likely be a close one. When it comes down to crunch time, athletes who are mentally tough rise above their past mistakes to make the play at hand. Those who can't handle the heat whither and choke under pressure.

If Saturday's outcome depends on a drive in the final two minutes, will Oregon come through?

If UCLA quarterback Drew Olson lobs a pass down the middle of the field to tight end Mercedes Lewis, will Oregon safety Justin Phinisee knock the ball away, or will visions of the touchdown he allowed to Cal's Craig Stevens last week hinder his reaction?

If Jared Siegel is called upon to nail an important field goal, will the senior be focused enough to drill the ball through the uprights, or will thoughts of his missed extra point last week jog through his mind?

If Kellen Clemens sees a receiver open downfield, will he have the confidence to throw him the ball, or will last week's abundance of Oregon drops make him think twice before pulling the trigger?

And if Clemens drills Keith Allen in the

ROETMAN, page 14

## Rise, shout, Pit Crew shirts are out

The first 1,000 students at Sunday's game against Western Oregon will receive a free T-shirt

BY ALEX TAM  
FREELANCE REPORTER

It's the one commodity all student basketball fans want their hands on.

It symbolizes the most die-hard of die-hard basketball fans on campus.

It's not a home-game ticket for the Civil War game or games against Arizona or UCLA. It's the Pit Crew T-shirt.

This season, the highly demanded shirts will be distributed at the Nov. 14 exhibition game against Western Oregon.

The shirt is given out before every men's basketball season to the first 1,000 students through the gates at McArthur Court at a pre-determined non-conference game.

After the shirts are distributed, student game-attendees will be allowed to enter Mac Court early for a shot at prime seating in what is widely considered one of the most exciting college basketball venues in the country.

Pit Crew president Eric Weckert said the demand for shirts is so big, he receives nearly 30 e-mails a day from fans asking when shirts are going to be distributed or whether they can still get a shirt without attending Sunday's game.

"You have to say no to those people because the people that deserve the shirts, in my view, are the ones who wait outside in line for hours," Weckert said.

Weckert, a 22-year-old business major, said he advises people to get there early if they want a shirt, citing last season when people started waiting in line before noon for the 7 p.m. game.

"That's one of the biggest things I can say if you want your shirt," Weckert said. "Make sure you get in line early."

However, he said last season students "panicked and literally got crushed" in hot pursuit



ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

The Pit Crew shows its spirit last season at McArthur court against Oregon State. Pit Crew president Eric Weckert will distribute new T-shirts this Sunday at the men's basketball exhibition game against Western Oregon.

of the shirts. Weckert stressed that if people are there early, "they're going to have no problem getting a shirt."

Weckert is in his second year as president of the Pit Crew, which was formed by head coach Ernie Kent and the University's sports marketing program back in 1999. The story is Kent's wife, Dianna, came up with the name "Pit Crew" and it has stood ever since.

One of the group's founding members is ex-Duck and current NFL quarterback Joey Harrington. Weckert said he expects Harrington to make at least one appearance this season.

"He usually doesn't pass up a good basketball game," he said. "He loves basketball."

Weckert said the best part of being a Pit Crew member is watching the crowd erupt after a huge dunk or three-point shot during a game.

"To look around and see all these people

coming together regardless of who you are," he said. "I mean, that's the thing. It's that you're united by this one thing — the Pit Crew."

Fellow member Joey Greenberg, who is the head of sponsorships, added that it's great to see the older alumni join in the celebration with the students.

"We're up and jumping around and it actually affects them and the whole place gets rocking and it starts affecting the players," Greenberg said, who is also a 22-year-old business major. "I think that's the coolest part — getting the more stoic, older people to (cheer)."

One of the group's biggest targets from opposing teams is Washington guard Nate Robinson, who is listed as 5-foot-9. Robinson is infamous for being referred to as Gary Coleman whenever he visits Eugene.

PIT CREW, page 14

■ Duck volleyball

## Oregon hosts slew of stars when Stanford, Cal visit

Stanford's Ogonna Nnamani, Kristin Richards and Cal's Samantha Carter headline two of the Pac-10's most potent rosters

BY STEPHEN MILLER  
SPORTS REPORTER

The fog has shown up in Oregon, and right on cue, the Bay Area schools are paying a visit to McArthur Court this week.

Stanford and California are on the schedule this week, but Ogonna Nnamani will attempt to attract all of Oregon's attention.

The Cardinal (17-6 overall, 9-3 Pacific-10 Conference) possess a roster that features two high-caliber outside hitters. Stanford, currently ranked No. 11 in the nation, has devastated many of its under-prepared opponents with Nnamani, a senior and an Olympian, and sophomore Kristin Richards, the 2003 Pac-10 Freshman of the Year.

"Stanford has probably the two best left-side hitters in the country," Oregon head coach Carl Ferreira said. He said Nnamani and Richards could be the most talented "one-two punch" in the history of collegiate volleyball.

Based on previous observation, Ferreira estimated that Nnamani has one of the most explosive vertical leaping abilities in women's volleyball which has allowed her to hit over blockers and made her one of the Pac-10's all-time kill leaders.

Oregon lost to Stanford in three games during its last matchup but managed to hold Nnamani to 14 kills on her home floor.

"It felt like we detained her and that was a pretty big feat," senior libero Katie O'Neil said. "I hope we can do it again."

"We're just going to do what we can to commit (the block) on her and try to channel the balls cross-court."

O'Neil believes she has adapted to Nnamani's cross-court style of attack, but she said facing Nnamani can still be overwhelming with not as many powerful hitters in the league this season.

Ferreira said of Stanford: "I think they block well and they sideout extremely well. You know (an attack) is coming and it's still very difficult to defend."

Cal (12-9, 7-5) is coming in with a two-match losing streak that was the result of an injured libero and a missing setter. Oregon took one game from the No. 14 Golden Bears in the teams' last meeting on Oct. 15.

Sophomore setter Samantha Carter is ranked second among Pac-10 setters, averaging 13.52 assists per game. Carter holds the school record for assists in a single season (1,555). While she served a one-match suspension against USC, sophomore setter Meredith Hasson collected 51 assists in her first career start.

Senior Camille Leffall has 402 blocks in her

VOLLEYBALL, page 14

### IN BRIEF

#### After nine seasons, Steffen resigns as women's head soccer coach

Oregon women's soccer head coach Bill Steffen announced on Wednesday that he will resign from his position, effective immediately.

Steffen refused to comment on his resignation.

The 45-year-old has spent nine seasons on the Oregon bench and is the only head coach for the Ducks since they regained varsity status in 1996.

In his tenure, Steffen compiled a 49-107-14 record, including a nine-win season in 2003, which stands as the school record.

His resignation comes on the heels of a disappointing 2004 season, where the Ducks went 3-13-3 overall and 0-7-2 in the Pacific-10 conference. It was the first time the Ducks had been held winless in conference play and marked the worst overall record since 2002.

The injury bug sabotaged success for the Ducks all season. Oregon was without its biggest offensive threat Nicole Garbin for the season, while several other players' seasons were cut short.

"Injuries definitely played a part," Oregon junior midfielder Cristian Higa said. "And it affected us as a team."

Prior to his arrival in Eugene, he served as women's assistant coach at North Carolina for three years (1993-95), helping the Tar Heels to two NCAA national titles and a third trip to the national semifinals. He also assisted the nationally ranked men's team in Chapel Hill, N.C., in 1994 and 1995. He served as a head coach at Greensboro College (1991-93) and Lyndon State College (1984), and was an assistant coach at Duke (1993) and Furman (1989-91).

— Brian Smith