

■ In my opinion



STEPHEN MILLER
OFF THE CROSSBAR

Turkey Day food relived and sports unraveled

You want the truth? I'll admit it.

I was too busy stuffing my face, sleeping in and studying to keep up with everything that happened in the world of sports over the holiday weekend.

No worries. Hakuna Matata. No huge fights broke out or anything.

As normal, everything was documented and recorded as I was shoving my mom's homemade mashed potatoes and cornbread stuffing in my pie hole.

Speaking of being shoved down a pie hole, did you see the NFL beating that Seattle took from Buffalo?

Willis McGahee scored four touchdowns on the ground for the Bills. He made more trips into the end zone than I made to the kitchen for more taters.

Be cool, my babies; the Seahawks still sit above St. Louis by half a game on top of the NFC West. It's a good thing that game wasn't played during Thanksgiving dinner or the Heimlich maneuver may have been necessary to dislodge a wishbone from my throat.

How about the pounding Detroit, and more specifically Joey Harrington, took on Turkey Day? It was just the same old, same old. The Lions struggled because they couldn't figure out how to protect their passer, making Harrington a fantasy football owner's nightmare.

On Sunday, Denver was upset at home in the snow by Oakland in a game that was better than the 'fog bowl' between USC and Oregon State a few weeks ago.

The two Ohio teams racked up about a bazillion points in their matchup over the break. Actually, the two teams combined for 106 points as Cincinnati won by 10 over the Cleveland Browns. You do the arithmetic; I have other things to talk about.

In the basketball world there was good news: Portland handed New Jersey its ninth-straight loss. However, Mo Cheeks and company sit at the bottom of the Northwest Division with Denver. The Blazers strung together a 16-1 run in the third quarter and Zach Randolph posted 23 points in the game. And if there's one exciting thing in Rip City, it's seeing Zebo fight through a triple-team.

Oregon alumni Luke Jackson and Fred Jones (who I never got to see play in person) are both on contending teams in the Eastern Conference.

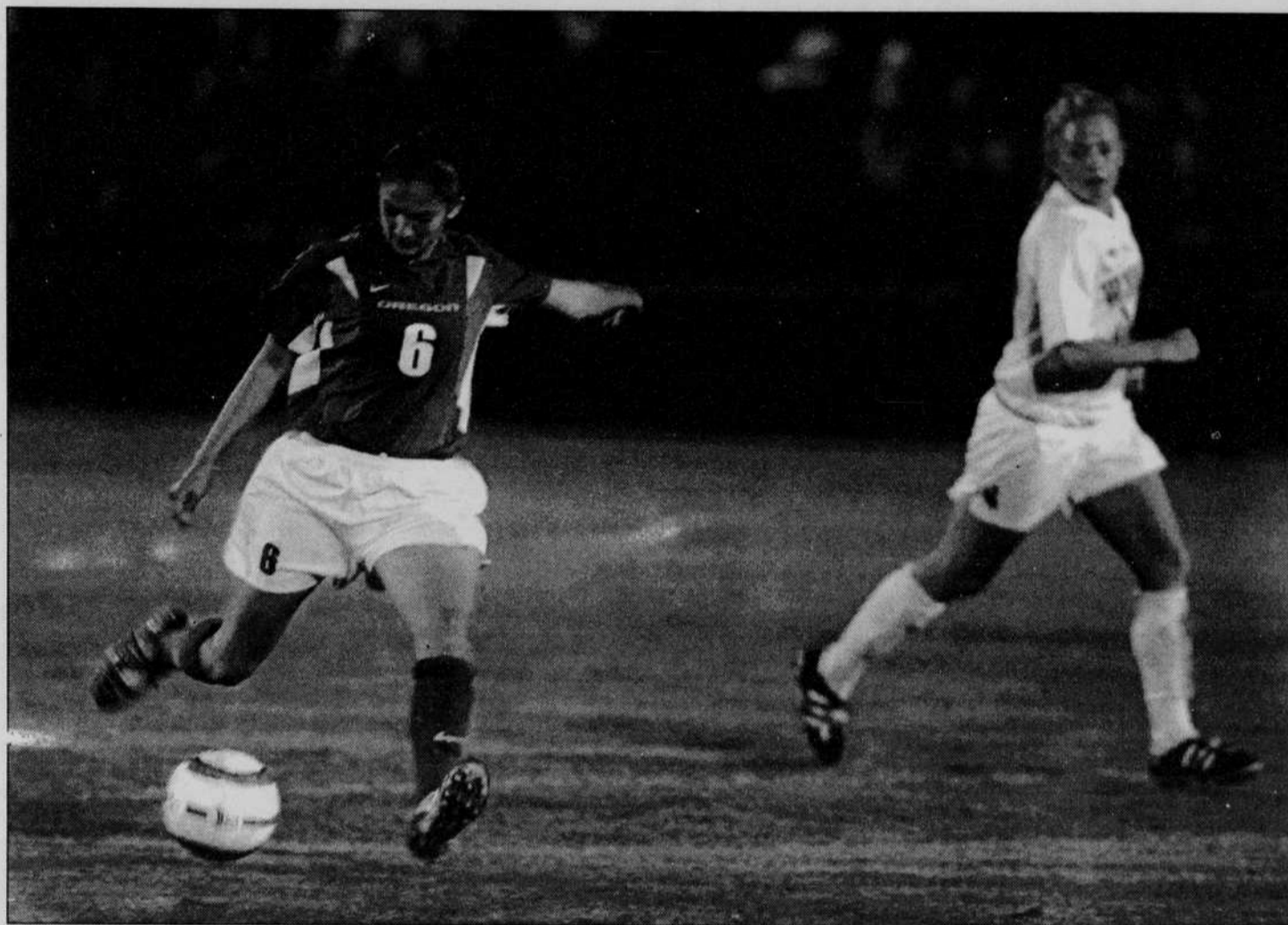
Jackson scored a career-best seven points for Cleveland in nine minutes last week against the Chicago Bulls. It was only the third game he has played in this season.

Freddie, now minus the "ie," is averaging 35 minutes per game this season with the Pacers. He scored a career-high 31 points against Orlando the day after the team's Nov. 19 brawl with Detroit. Frederick, minus the "erick," tallied 14 points in Sunday's loss to Seattle.

Luke Ridnour appears to be doing a fine job of stabilizing the Sonics' top spot in the Northwest Division and its four-game win streak; currently the second longest in the league. Ridnour is scoring nine points per game and dishing out almost six assists on average. Keep an eye on

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■ Duck soccer



LAUREN WIMER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon freshman Kami Kapaku, seen earlier this season, led the team in goals (4) and points (9) in a season that the Ducks struggled through offensively.

Ducks limp through season

Plagued by adversity, Oregon goes winless in Pac-10 conference

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

Nothing went according to plan for the Oregon women's soccer team this season.

From spring practice to their final match against Arizona in early November, the Ducks struggled against a relentless enemy—injuries.

Oregon spent its entire season patching together a lineup—which included as many as five freshmen—to face a schedule that included 10 teams that qualified for the 2004 NCAA Tournament.

At one time or another throughout the season, the Ducks were without six starters due to injuries.

The end result was a 3-13-3 overall record and Oregon's first winless Pacific-10 Conference season since the team gained varsity status in 1996.

"It didn't go how the seniors wished it would have," Oregon senior Kelly Baird said. "We had a lot of youngsters, and the older players (on the team) couldn't get it done."

Ducks struggle through unhealthy fall season

Injuries. Injuries. Injuries. The one constant in an inconsistent season.

Going into the spring, Oregon was without forwards Nicole Garbin, Mele French and Andrea



NICOLE BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon sophomore Andrea Valadez was second on the team with 35 shots and ranked fifth on the team in points (3).

Valadez. At the end of the year, Valadez was the only one of those three in the lineup—and she still suffered from nagging leg injuries.

Garbin, Oregon's top offensive threat from last season, was lost for the year after suffering a knee injury early in spring practice.

For her career, Garbin ranks first all-time in assists (13), is tied for second in game-winning goals (6), is third in points (36), third in goals (12) and fourth in shots (112).

"(Injuries) played a pretty big part," Baird said. "When people get injured, (the team) can't use them, and that is obviously a factor."

The injuries left the Ducks without much offense for the en-

tire season. Oregon was shut out a record 10 times and scored more than three goals on only two occasions.

Oregon was the lowest scoring team in the conference, managing only four goals in nine conference matches. In comparison, conference leader UCLA scored 20 goals in the same span.

Oregon was also the only team to score less than 10 points during conference play. The Ducks ranked last in every offensive category in the Pac-10.

The bright spot offensively for Oregon was the production from freshman Kami Kapaku. The Hawaii native led the team in goals (4) and points (9). Her three

points against Wyoming was a team-high in 2004.

Steffen resigns as Oregon head coach

The 2004 season also saw the end of Bill Steffen's reign as head coach.

Steffen compiled a 49-107-14 record during his nine-year tenure. His 2003 squad won a school-record nine matches and tied for a school-record three wins in conference play.

As the Ducks' head coach, Steffen never finished above seventh in the conference.

Prior to his arrival in Eugene, Steffen served as a 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.

Ducks lose Mele French due to medical problems

Recurring injuries also claimed the career of French, another one of the Duck top scorers.

The junior suffered from ongoing concussions and made the decision after an Oregon State match midway through the season to end her career for medical reasons.

"She was one of the most dangerous forwards in the Pac-10," former assistant head coach John Galas said. "Behind Garbin, she was a player that the conference had to take notice of."

In 2004, French ranked second in points (5), tied for second in goals (2) and tied for third