

■ In my opinion



BRIAN SMITH
LEFTY SPECIALIST

A look at the Mariners' shaky past, bright future

I am a diehard Seattle Mariners fan. Go ahead and laugh.

Done? I realize that Seattle isn't one of the most prestigious clubs in the majors — no championship trophies, only four playoff appearances and no league championships — but then again, the franchise has been around for less than 30 years.

I also realize that up until 1995 (and even during most of 1995) the Mariners were laughable at best.

They played in an arcade-style stadium and ran out a not-so-arcade-style brand of baseball, finishing over .500 only twice before the 1995 season.

But that's okay because I was there with them. I remember Harold Reynolds and Alvin Davis (though barely, I was six), and even though I might not remember Jim Presley or Ken Phelps, I was there.

I have never pledged allegiance to any other team, I was never a fair-weather fan of the Red Sox or whoever was hot at the time. The Kingdome was my Mecca, and I still make the pilgrimage up I-5 every summer.

So the last 10 years have been pretty good for me, with some exceptions.

I was there (skipping class) for Luis Sojo's bases-loaded double that hid under the bench in the dugout in 1995 during the one-game playoff against the California Angels.

I was there for the sweep of the Chicago White Sox in the 2000 American League Division Series.

I was there in 2001, when the Mariners came back from a 2-0 deficit against the Cleveland Indians to win the American League Division Series.

And lastly, I was there in 1995 (yelling "Refuse to Lose!") when Ken Griffey Jr. hit five home runs — three at Yankee Stadium — in the Mariners' 3-2 series win against the Yankees (the only time they have beat New York in the playoffs.)

And yes, I was there last year when the Mariners went 63-99, put anyone and everyone on the mound and couldn't figure out how to hit the ball out of Safeco Field. Even their defense, normally the best in the league, fell to the middle of the pack last season.

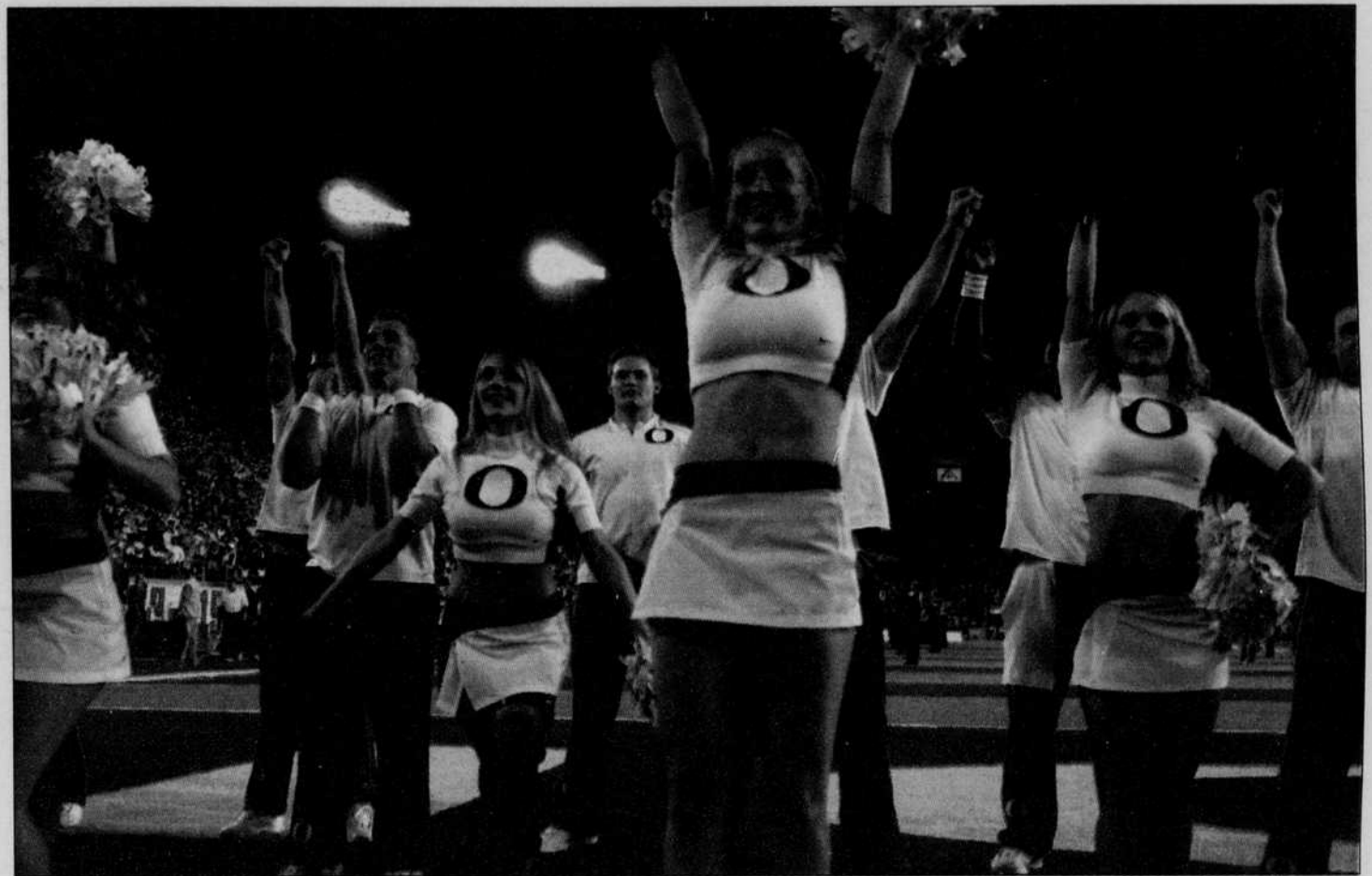
Ever seen those cartoons where the car falls apart into hundreds of pieces at once? That's what happened.

So now in 2005, I am back for my Mariners, and after an offseason of being a pessimistic naysayer, I can't wait for April 4 when the Minnesota Twins come to Safeco Field for the season opener.

The Mariners addressed their biggest problem of being the lowest scoring team in the American League. Seattle was the only team not to score 700 runs last year, 249 behind the league-leading Red Sox.

I thought the offseason signings of Adrian Beltré and Richie Sexson were sketchy at first, but now that I have thought about it, bringing in a 25-year-old player who led the majors in home runs last year and a guy who has the potential to hit

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DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Oregon cheerleaders, seen here at Autzen Stadium this fall, raised over \$10,000 to travel to Las Vegas and compete in the USA National Championships.

Cheer team nabs first at nationals

Justin Ruffier and Brittany Willis also won third place for Oregon in the College Partner Stunt Division at the Las Vegas competition

BY BEAU EASTES
STAFF WRITER

Two-and-a-half minutes. For most people, that equates to about 200 heartbeats. In the time it takes to microwave a bag of popcorn or find your car keys, the Oregon cheer team, along with seven other finalists from across the country, had one shot to make its 2004-05 season either a startling success or a mediocre mishap. This short period of time was the only chance to validate practices at 7 a.m., aching backs and rebuilt knees.

"It's only two-and-a-half minutes to prove your entire season," Dan Cotton, a veteran member of the Oregon squad, said. "It's not like football where you get extra plays."

The Ducks pulled it off. Cotton and 24 other members of Oregon's cheerleading team made quality use of their limited stage time and took home first place at the United Spirit Association Collegiate Nationals in Large Co-Ed Show Cheer Division on Feb. 6 and 7 at the Cashman Center in Las Vegas.

Amidst the glitz and glam of Sin City, the Duck cheer squad accomplished a goal that

was set after last year's non-placing finish at the same event.

"We thought that this isn't so tough," said 11th-year head coach Laraine Raish, describing the Oregon attitude after a third-place finish in 2003. The Ducks came face to face with reality when they failed to make the second day finals the following year. After the disappointing showing, the Oregon squad vowed to return to Vegas with a vengeance.

"First place is won at practice, you just go to the competition to pick (the trophy) up," Cotton said of Oregon's attitude that was adopted in pursuit of excellence.

Cotton, Eric Arola, Brittany Willis, Ryan Long, Jamie Fryback and Richie Houdek threw conventional wisdom aside and began

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■ Outdoor recreation

Fishing on the FLY

The Metolius River, located close to Black Butte, provides a peaceful setting for an uncommon sport

BY ASHLEY GRIFFIN
OUTDOOR RECREATION REPORTER

Fly fishing may seem like a sport most appropriate for people such as the rugged characters of the movie "A River Runs Through It," but hidden within Oregon's diverse landscape runs a river that challenges this sentiment. The Metolius River mimics the natural scenes from the aforementioned movie while providing a fly-fishing opportunity in Oregon.

The 28.6-mile Metolius River is located near Camp Sherman, just outside Black Butte Ranch. While

the two-hour drive from Eugene is a bit lengthy, it is worth the distance to explore and fish at one of the largest spring-fed rivers in the United States.

Junior Aaron Brent-Fulps, the coordinator of Club Sports fly-fishing, said the Metolius provides some of the best trout fishing in Oregon.

"It's a short, swift river, real cold and real fast," he said. "Since it is real clear and cold, it's a good area for trout."

One of the river's main draws is its pristine environment. It is a forested run in Central Oregon



COURTESY

Senior Chase Gauthier holds a bull trout during a recent fly-fishing trip to the Metolius River. The river is two hours from Eugene, just outside Black Butte Ranch.

lined by Ponderosa Pine, Red Cedar and Lodgepole Pine trees.

"It's one of the best fly-fishing rivers in Oregon because of the scenery," Brent-Fulps said.

Unlike other local rivers, he said the Metolius is not heavily populated, which adds to the solitude of the sport and can improve chances

of catching a decent-sized trout.

When picking a location, Brent-Fulps said it is important for people to study their destinations thoroughly.

"If you haven't been, it's a sport where there's a lot you need to know ... what's hatching, what's

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