

■ In my opinion



CLAYTON JONES
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

Baseball is more than just a game to spectators

There may be nothing better for a true baseball fan than attending a major league baseball game.

And I'm talking about a true fan.

The fan who can watch and enjoy a 1-0 pitcher's dual on television for the entire nine innings.

The fan who can appreciate the sacrifice fly, the hit-and-run, the squeeze, a good pick-off move, bringing in a lefty to face a lefty, the 6-4-3 double play and the good old-fashioned brush back pitch.

But even a moderate fan, or someone who doesn't understand the game, can enjoy ballpark entertainment.

As I sat in the stands at Safeco Field on Friday evening to watch the Seattle Mariners facing the Texas Rangers, the atmosphere at the ballpark reminded me of all the other reasons I love this game.

Walking into the stadium and seeing the thick, dark green grass and taking in the smell of the food makes something inside me tingle. There is a buzz that surrounds every ballpark before a game.

Of course, it's not just the game on the field that has everyone going, especially early in the season. I'm not a die-hard Mariners fan, but most of the 30,000 people at the game were. I heard talk of how this Seattle offense is better than those of the past with the addition of Richie Sexson and Adrian Beltre. How Jeremy Reed, the Mariner's new opening-day centerfielder, is more than adequate to fill the spot despite not having a hit in his first four games of the season. But he did get a clutch hit by the end of the night, and I had to listen to a vocal fan seated behind me yell "Jeeerrrr-mmmmyyyyyy" at least a dozen times.

Between innings, fans are entertained by an assortment of tidbits. The Mariners' moose rode around the field on an ATV, but what might have gotten the biggest roar of the night was a short videogame-style boat race displayed on the field's big-screen TV, which had the crowd betting on which boat would win.

A mandatory purchase at a ball game is a beer accompanied by a sausage or hot dog with all the toppings — onions, peppers, relish, mustard, ketchup or anything else you kind can find to squeeze inside the bun. If there aren't toppings all over me by the time I finish, then I didn't put enough on.

Then there are the warm peanuts. On this particular night they were a must, because it was chilly and the tinfoil bag kept my hands warm. Much like the hot-dog toppings, peanut shells should cover you when you reach the bottom of the bag or else you just didn't do it right.

Then there are the sways of boos and cheers from the crowd that depend upon how the home team is faring. And of course, drunken fans contribute enthusiastically to

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ZANE RITT | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon redshirt sophomore Jordan Kent runs to victory in the 100 meters during the Pepsi Team Invitational at Hayward Field on Saturday. Kent competed in his first event for the Ducks since 2003.

■ Women's track and field

Seven event titles can't secure a win for Oregon

The Ducks fell half a point shy of first-place Missouri's 171.5 points and had to settle for the second spot at the Pepsi Team Invitational

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

Oregon's Bree Fuqua knew she had the ability to close out the Pepsi Team Invitational with first place finishes in the discus and shotput events.

But she didn't know how fierce a competitor Missouri's Melanie Uher would be, and Fuqua couldn't prevent Uher from slinging a disc 165 feet and one inch on her final throw attempt to edge Fuqua by five inches for the win.

"I wasn't actually sure what the competition would be like," said Fuqua, who admitted she wasn't expecting many challengers. "But I'm glad we had some."

A narrow difference in distances rewarded the Missouri women's team with two points more than Oregon in the event. Even that small scoring gap was greater than the Tigers' final margin of victory against the Ducks for the Invitational team crown — half a point — in the 18-event meet at Hayward Field on Saturday.

With 171 points, the Ducks lost by a hair to Missouri (171.5) but still finished ahead of Washington (164.5) and Indiana (107). Oregon missed its chance to claim a third straight victory at the Pepsi Invitational, even though the Ducks claimed seven individual victories — more than any other opponent.

Oregon throws coach Lance Deal said at the conclusion of the meet that he was unsure of the final results but was aware that the point distribution was scattered and positions were continually being shuffled.

"Sometimes you win, sometimes you don't," he said, adding that he knew his athletes did

about all they could by winning three of the four throwing events.

Fuqua nearly threw a personal best in the discus (164-8) in her second-place finish.

"I was kind of upset about the discus," Fuqua said. "I had one throw left after (Uher) threw farther than me, and I didn't really respond that well, but it gave me a little more motivation for the shotput."

The senior achieved more success in the shotput, rewriting the school record for the second time in less than three weeks with a 53-11 1/4 heave that secured her first in the event.

Redshirt junior Brittany Hinchcliffe started the Ducks off strong by setting a new school record in her second attempt at the hammer throw, the first women's event to take place Saturday afternoon. She then bested that mark in her next attempt with a 199-2 hurl, good for first at a distance almost 24 feet farther than teammate Katie Kersh's top throw, who finished second.

"I'm really happy with today's mark," said Hinchcliffe. "I was struggling a little bit in the beginning of the season, but today all that hard training paid off."

"I really wanted the school record today — I wanted it two weeks ago."

Oregon's All-American duo of Roslyn Lundeen and Elisa Crumley competed together in the javelin for the first time since late 2003. Lundeen threw her spear 156-5 to win the event, and Crumley followed with a 144-9 toss to beat Washington's Tiffany Zahn by two inches for second.

Senior Sarah Malone received a two-week

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■ Men's track and field

Ducks nab their 10th team title in tourney

Oregon's track and field team took home six individual titles at the Pepsi Team Invitational

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon men's track team used the return of a star and a budding rivalry to capture its 10th team title in 16 tries at the Pepsi Team Invitational at Hayward Field on Saturday.

Oregon (180 1/2 team points) took home six individual titles en route to an 11-point victory over second-place Washington (169 1/2). In addition, the Ducks took home 12 regional qualifying marks. The event was highlighted by the dual between Oregon senior Leonidas Watson and Indiana's Aarik Wilson in the men's second event of the day, the long jump.

Watson and Wilson ignited the crowd of 2,667 as both took to the runway for the start of the long jump competition. Wilson, the reigning NCAA Indoor champion in both the long jump and triple jump, took little time to show the crowd how he captured those titles. His first jump on Saturday was marked at 25-4 1/2, good for the

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■ Duck football

Team's prep showcases new strategy for offense

As in the past few seasons, the Ducks showed ups and downs in their first spring scrimmage

BY ION ROETMAN
SENIOR SPORTS REPORTER

Dennis Dixon gave spectators a glimpse of Oregon's new wide-open offense capabilities during the team's first spring scrimmage Friday in the Ed Moshofsky Sports Center.

The rising sophomore quarterback kept the ball on an option to his left and scampered for a 25-yard touchdown, leaving a group of defenders in his wake.

The San Leandro, Calif., native also showed off his arm, completing 4 of 6 passes for 36 yards, including a 2-yard touchdown to redshirt freshman tight end Casey McKillip.

With the good, however, came the expected miscues of an offensive work-in-progress.

Oregon running backs twice turned the ball over on fumbles. Senior quarterback Kellen Clemens was forced to backtrack 30 yards to recover an errant shotgun snap during the scrimmage's first offensive series. And head coach Mike Bellotti said he didn't see enough big plays from his wide receivers.

Despite mistakes, Dixon said the offense

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