

■ In my opinion



BRIAN SMITH
LEFTY SPECIALIST

A look back at the highs and lows of a columnist

I've been thinking for a while now about how to go out on top, in terms of column writing.

You see, this is it.

My last sports column.

And now that the thunderous applause and jubilation has ceased, I've figured out how to go out.

It's exactly how I started way back in September.

In my own curious, sometimes sappy and mostly circuitous way.

I wish I would have pulled a Rulon Gardner and left my pen and pad in the middle of Mac Court.

I wish this column could have the fanfare that Lou Gehrig had when he announced his retirement in front of a sold-out Yankee Stadium.

I wish that I could have the audacity and pride to announce that "I am the greatest sports writer of all-time," à la Rickey Henderson.

I wish that this announcement meant my five-year waiting period started today, or that I could go out on top with a Pulitzer Prize (the Vince Lombardi trophy for journalists) in one hand and a happy sports editor standing next to me, being showered in confetti.

But instead I leave (I know, I know, wrap it up already) with 20 or so columns that go from foul line to foul line in terms of topics.

Oregon sports.

Baseball.

Hashing.

More baseball. Basketball. Sports and business. On and on.

In the end, I'm happy with about four of them. The other ones just leave me scratching my head wondering what would have happened if I had started them earlier in the day and with a solid base of knowledge about the topic I was writing about.

I've let you in on some of the thoughts that occur in the eloquently placed dome at the top of the column and for that, I apologize.

I could use a cliché about learning, but I can't tell you how much of an education it is to receive feedback from a person outside the country who happened to stumble across some of my work.

However, I don't regret anything I have put into print, including that disastrous Jose Canseco column, which turned out to be my thoughts on another sportswriter's made-up Canseco quotes. The moment you regret putting anything into print is the moment you need to step back and decide whether you want to continue writing. I may not be in love with everything I have written — and in some cases, I don't even agree with what I said a month ago — but I will not stray from anything I have put under my byline.

The only thing I wish I would have done is educated myself more about the men's track program. Only now I realize that I spent the last ten weeks covering one of the most prestigious programs in the country.

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■ Club Sports



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon's Jonathan Loomis, seen here earlier this season, collected four of his team's 14 total hits in Club baseball's trip to the World Series in Florida. The team was bounced from the tournament after three games.

Baseball bows out of World Series

Oregon recorded only two runs in their final two games of the tournament against Colorado State and Wisconsin Eau-Claire

BY LUKE ANDREWS
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

Despite an opening round victory over North Carolina State, the Oregon Club baseball team was eliminated Saturday from the National Club Baseball Association's World Series in Bradenton, Fla.

The Ducks finished the tournament with a 1-2 record.

"We all walked out of there with our heads held high," head coach Bradley Ficek said. "(The tournament) was a great experience."

Oregon, after defeating North Carolina State 3-1, was beaten 6-1 by the eventual champion Colorado State Rams. Oregon then fell 8-1 in an elimination game against Wisconsin Eau-Claire.

"I think we would have gone further in the other bracket, but to be the best you have to beat the best," Ficek said. "We were fortunate to have the opportunity to play against some of the top teams."

Against No. 1 Colorado State, Oregon fell behind early 2-0 after a two-run home run in the first inning. Oregon cut the lead in the third inning after two Colorado State errors and a Travis Chock single allowed Marcus Denney to score. But the Rams posted four runs in the

bottom of the inning, opening a 6-1 lead, which proved to be the final margin of victory.

"We made too many errors at inopportune times," Ficek said. "If we could have come up with a clutch hit here or there, it would have been a different story."

Oregon was again punchless offensively against Wisconsin Eau-Claire. After managing an early 1-0 lead after Adam Dexter scored on a fielder's choice, the Ducks were outscored 8-0 in the final five innings. As a team, Oregon managed only three hits.

"We just ran up against a team that was hungry and took advantage of opportunities," Ficek said.

Colorado State went on to beat Wisconsin Eau-Claire and Illinois, giving the Rams their second consecutive World Series title.

"They (CSU) are a great team and very well-coached," Ficek said. "I think we played them as well as anybody though."

For the Ducks, Jonathan Loomis and Marcus Denney led the offensive charge. The pair accounted for half of Oregon's 14 hits in the tournament. Loomis finished with a combined 4-9, and Denney went 3-9 with an RBI.

Though the season may have ended in disappointment, the future of Oregon baseball

looks encouraging. The Ducks return starters Travis Brown, Matt Oss, Jordan Denney and Adam Dexter. Oregon will also have the benefit of a deep and experienced pitching staff next season.

The Ducks will return every pitcher who pitched significant innings last season, including: Denney, Jay Tlougan, Tim Hegdahl, Greg Wells, David Schott, Nicholas Hall, Jonathan Jwayad, Tom O'Brien, Brent Sasser, Donald Udell, Geoff Ziemer and Scott Sullivan.

Sullivan will return as the team's ace after producing an undefeated season including a near-perfect game in the World Series opener against North Carolina State. In all, the Ducks return 24 players from a team that won both league and regional titles.

"If we continue to work hard, I only see good things for our program," Ficek said. "Everyone is so hungry and really excited. We are only going up from here."

Oregon, however, must part ways with much of its offensive firepower with the departure of Gavin Wahl-Stephens and Travis Chock. The two finished tied with a team-leading four home runs. Chock also led the team in hits, runs, RBIs and stolen bases. In addition, the Ducks lose Marcus Denney, who led the team in triples.

Other key losses include Tory Caputo, Jerry Wahl-Stephens and catcher Loomis.

"We accomplished a lot of our goals this season," Ficek said. "We know what it takes now."

IN BRIEF

Oregon State baseball team enters playoffs as No. 8 seed

CORVALLIS — It was a busy holiday weekend for the Oregon State Beavers baseball team, which landed the Pacific-10 Conference title, an NCAA regional and the No. 8 seed among 64 teams in the postseason.

Next weekend, the Beavers will share Goss Stadium at Coleman Field with Virginia, Ohio

State and St. John's.

"They won the Pac-10 and if you look at who they play, it is an outstanding league," Ohio State coach Bob Todd said in a statement. "We know they are a good team and are excited to be heading out there to play."

The Beavers are led by outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury, who is batting .415, and sophomore right-hander Dallas Buck, who is 11-1 with a 1.93 ERA.

Ohio State's appearance in the NCAA tournament is the 17th in school history and the 11th under Todd. Virginia is making its fifth NCAA tournament appearance.

The winner of the weekend's regional advances to a Super Regional at a site to be determined. The eight winners will play in the College World Series, which starts June 17 in Omaha, Neb.

— The Associated Press