

"But the real tragedy was that 15 hadn't been colored yet."

Steve Spurrier, former Florida football coach, bemoaning the fact that a fire at Auburn's football dorm had destroyed 20 books in 1991.

■ In my opinion



SCOTT J. ADAMS
INTENTIONAL GROUNDING

Revamped NHL makes return after a year away

I know this week's column places me at risk of losing some of my few-but-loyal readers, but I feel it needs to be written, so bear with me: This column is about hockey.

I see you haven't turned the page yet, so I'll keep going.

I could not be happier with the return of the National Hockey League following a season-long hiatus spurred by a 10-month players lockout. I'm well aware that most of America may not have mourned the absence of professional hockey last year, but fans of the sport, such as myself, are in need of it and happy to see it back.

In my opinion, the NHL offers the most exciting playoff action this side of the Big Dance. The 16 teams that make the playoffs are faced with playing a minimum of 16 post-season games in order to raise Lord Stanley's Cup. That means there are four series to be played with each being best of seven. Don't think for a minute that the playoffs are without upsets. With every year there is a post-season shakeup favoring an underdog.

Just look at the current caretakers of the Stanley Cup in Tampa Bay. It has been two years since head coach John Tortorella and his Lightning shocked the hockey world by topping Calgary in the 2004 finals. Many never thought they'd see a team from Florida hold the cup for more than one year, much less beat a team from Canada in a hockey series.

The regular season opens today, and there is much to look for in the opening games as the NHL tries to both resurrect and reinvent itself with its \$39 million salary cap. The league has implemented a number of new rules and regulations in the hopes of making the game more fast-paced, ultimately favoring the quickest players. One such alteration is the four-foot addition to each offensive zone. This was made to encourage more offensive play, mainly on power plays. The size of the neutral zone is being reduced by four feet, but the blue lines and center line will remain 12 inches wide. ESPN analyst Scott Burnside feels that these changes will provide "much-needed room to create offense."

The biggest change to the game is the addition of the shoot-out, ending the days of regular season ties. No regular or post-season game will end in a tie or be left solely to overtime to be decided. After a scoreless five-minute overtime period, three players from each team — picked by their coaches — will compete in a shoot-out. This is different from college football, in which statistics and the score are penciled into the archives, with the final score of a game ending in a shoot-out showing the victor winning by only one goal.

It's clear that sports fans who yearn for a quick ending to a tie game will take joy in this new arrangement. But as with any rule change, this is going to take time to grow accustomed to. Shoot-outs have been used in professional soccer for as far back as I can remember, and still there is a

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TRANSCENDING the sideline

Former soccer players Nicole Wilcox and Jen Hull help athletic coaching staff

BY JEFFREY DRANSFELDT
SPORTS REPORTER

They have the appearance of athletes — fit and strong as they stand along the sideline. It's just not a look you expect of former athletes, especially not ones retired from the game.

The competitiveness remains — it's just channeled differently. Years of learning and competing at a high level have provided the coaches a foundation with which to teach a promising Oregon soccer team.

The Oregon coaching staff leans toward the young side, and doesn't hesitate to go beyond the sideline to the field if that's what it takes to show what they teach. Whether it be head coach Tara Erickson, assistant coaches Mike Smith and Nicole Wilcox or volunteer coach Jen Hull, this staff has taken a hands-on approach.

At practice, one or multiple members of the coaching staff are always playing with the soccer team. Erickson, a former player at the University of Washington, holds her own, having given birth this year. Part on-field instruction, part necessity, the coaches' participation also helps to meliorate the blow of three players having season-long injuries and being unable to play, Smith said.

Wilcox, a member of Erickson's staff at Portland State, and Hull both had successful college careers. Their focus now is not playing, but teaching, though at first glance, Hull, an 2005 graduate, and Wilcox ('04) look as though they could still play competitively at the college level.

"They are great about relating to the players," Erickson said. "They are younger, a little more connected to them in age and physical ability."

Hull, a four-year starter at Seattle Pacific, has filled a volunteer position as goalkeepers coach. She has eased the transition of Jessie Chatfield, the promising freshman goalkeeper and Eugene native.

Like Hull, Wilcox played four years — two each with Iowa State and Washington State. After graduating, Wilcox joined Erickson while she was at Portland State. Erickson was hired by Oregon in January and Wilcox followed along, this time becoming an assistant



NICOLE BARKER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Nicole Wilcox, a former player at Washington State University, is helping the women's soccer team as an assistant coach. Wilcox is helping them offensively as they prepare for the Pac-10 Conference opener on Friday at Arizona.

coach after volunteering at PSU.

Both Wilcox and Hull look at their work not as taxing but as a chance to do something they enjoy and love, a chance to teach soccer to a younger generation. And having created a perennially successful program certainly hasn't hurt their morale.

Before Erickson's staff arrived at Oregon, the Ducks had gone 16-54-7 in eight years of Pacific-10 Conference play.

Hull works with goalkeepers after initial drills to open practice, working with Oregon's three goalies along the sideline.

At the center of instruction, Hull gives tips and motivation. She treats everyone the

same, not giving preferential treatment to anyone, whether it be the two-time starter Dominique Lainez, the standout newcomer Chatfield or the third-year Arizona transplant Emily Marrer.

Hull speaks highly of Lainez, who watches now behind Chatfield, the much heralded goalkeeper with six shutouts in her initial season. Lainez started two years in goal, logging 1,803 out of a possible 1,816 minutes in 2003 and starting 18 of 19 matches in 2004.

"It's really tough," Hull said. "With a goalkeeper, it's not a position that you can get

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■ Duck football

Defender's health is top priority

Defensive end Devan Long's play will be crucial against Arizona State's high-powered offensive led by quarterback Sam Keller

BY LUKE ANDREWS
SPORTS REPORTER

The return of a healthy Devan Long at defensive end will be a welcome sight for the Oregon defense as it prepares to take on Arizona State, one of the nation's highest-rated offenses.

Long, last year's team sack leader, is recovering from a leg injury suffered in the season-opener against Houston. The senior was sidelined for subsequent games against Montana and Fresno State and played a limited role against USC.

Long recorded three unassisted tackles and a game-high two sacks against Stanford on Saturday.

"I'm still trying to get back to 100 percent, but I am coming along," Long said. "It felt good to get back out there," he added.

Long's presence helped a defensive line that had struggled to pressure the quarterback in the early season. Entering last weekend, the Ducks had sacked opposing quarterbacks only seven times in four games. Oregon had five sacks against Stanford and limited Cardinal quarter-

back Trent Edwards to 156 yards passing.

The Duck defense also held Stanford to 220 total yards of offense and 64 yards rushing. Stanford gained a mere 15 yards in the second half and failed to score an offensive touchdown in the third and fourth quarter for the second consecutive week.

"Devan Long makes us whole on the defensive line," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "He's an effort guy and the best pass rusher that we have."

Getting pressure on the quarterback will be key for the Ducks this weekend against quarterback Sam Keller and a potent Sun Devil offense.

Nationally, Arizona State ranks first in passing yards, fourth in total yards per game and eighth in points per game.

Keller's favorite target this season has been senior wide receiver Derek Hagan, who, with 593 total receiving yards, ranks second nationally behind Oregon State's Mike Hass (831).

"[The Sun Devils] have always had a good offense," Long said. "We have to look at tape

and find some tendencies."

Correctable Mistakes

Though it didn't hurt them last weekend, the thorn in the Ducks' side has been penalties. Oregon was penalized an eye-popping 16 times for 170 yards on Saturday compared with Stanford's 8 for 64 yards.

Oregon's 46 total penalties rank third highest in the nation, and its 442 total penalty yards rank as the second highest total behind only Texas Tech.

"I don't like it. I don't condone it, and we will do everything we can to stop it," Bellotti said. "But they are things we can learn from and are not things that are set in stone in terms of we're always going to assume we are going to get penalties."

Saturday's game has all the makings of an ugly contest as Arizona State has also been penalized 46 times but for slightly less yardage. The Sun Devils rank fourth highest in the nation with 415 total penalty yards.

Owning the Second

Oregon has outscored its opponents a combined 55-27 in the second quarter this season.

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