

**The Oregon advantage**



**A.M. SPORTS**  
Andrew Millbrooke  
Sports Editor

*"The will to win is not nearly as important as the will to prepare to win."  
— Bob Knight*

With college football signing day upon us, we have the first real test for new Ducks head coach Mark Helfrich since taking over for Chip Kelly in late January. The big question is, will Helfrich and company be able to land the coveted four and five star recruits that Kelly brought in?

The rise of Chip Kelly from collegiate assistant coach to the hottest NFL coaching prospect was nothing short of remarkable. Kelly went from a \$200,000 per year job as offensive coordinator at Oregon in 2007, to making upwards of \$4 million per year from the Philadelphia Eagles, just a short six years later.

One thing that many failed to remember during all the glorification of Kelly and his run of four straight BCS games is that this Oregon program existed and succeeded long before Chip Kelly ever set foot on Oregon soil. The field is named Rich Brooks field, because he brought the Ducks from mediocrity in the early 1980s to a Rose Bowl appearance in 1995, before skirting off to the NFL himself.

Mike Bellotti coached the Joey Harrington led Ducks to a 38-16 Fiesta Bowl romp over Colorado in 2002, finishing second in the final AP rankings. Oregon would have played in the national title game that season under the current BCS format. Bellotti led the Ducks to a 21-3 record over the 2000 and 2001 seasons.

So, although Kelly brought the program to unprecedented heights, the Ducks were good before he got here and they will be good after he leaves. I believe Mark Helfrich will be a big part of that.

Oregon born and bred, Helfrich is in his dream job and unlike Kelly, I don't see him heading off to the NFL or any other college anytime soon. Helfrich is in his ultimate job right now.

Helfrich grew up in Coos Bay and attended Marshfield High School, before a record-setting career as a quarterback at Southern Oregon University. Helfrich earned NAIA all-American honors before jumping right into coaching after college. Helfrich has earned the right to his dream job.

Helfrich, 39, was the youngest offensive coordinator in the nation at a BCS school when Colorado hired him in 2006 at age 32. Now, Helfrich is poised to lead the program with the best owner in all of college sports (thanks, Uncle Phil) for the next three decades.

Oh, and about that old recruiting thing. I think Helfrich will be just fine as long as the Oregon coaching staff stays intact. One of the main reasons for the Ducks' continued success for the past 20 years has been a core group of coaches that remain in Eugene. These guys have seen first-hand as the program rose into greatness from a very deep and dark place.

Running backs coach Gary Campbell, the senior member of the staff, has been in Eugene for 30 years. Strength and conditioning coach Jim Radcliffe (28), offensive line coach and running game coordinator Steve Greatwood (26), defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti (21) and line-backers coach Don Pellum (20) have all been at Oregon for more than 20 years.

Experience brings results. On signing day, let's hope that some of the nation's top recruits think so.

# RUNNER: Speed to burn

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The talent that is so evident emerges when he steps onto the track. Although Sultessa proved to be a solid 8,000-meter runner this past cross country season, his real talent is his raw speed.

"He is the fastest kid I've ever had the opportunity to coach as far as pure speed from 100 meters to 5,000-meters," said Greg Letts, a 31-year veteran coach at Centennial High School in Portland. Letts coached Badane for four years at Centennial, molding him into a state champion in the 800-meters as a junior.

Letts said that Sultessa could have been on his 4x100 relay as a freshman, a spot reserved for the four fastest guys on the team. "Early on he would just run to win," said Letts. "He would sit back and rely on his speed." Letts is more than just a coach to Sultessa.

"He was my first coach and because of him I started running," said Sultessa. "He's not just a coach, he's like my dad. He helped me with everything. I didn't even speak English at that time." Sultessa didn't focus on training to be a great runner at first, but a little bit of success changed that.

"Until my junior year, I didn't know anything about running and I didn't take it seriously," said Sultessa. "My focus was just on winning. After I won at state my junior year, I started taking it serious and working out every day."

Letts is certain that Sultessa has what it takes to succeed as an

elite runner. "He loves track and field and he loves running," said Letts. "He's a Division I caliber runner, he just has to mature into it. He has a real passion for it and he's a worker."

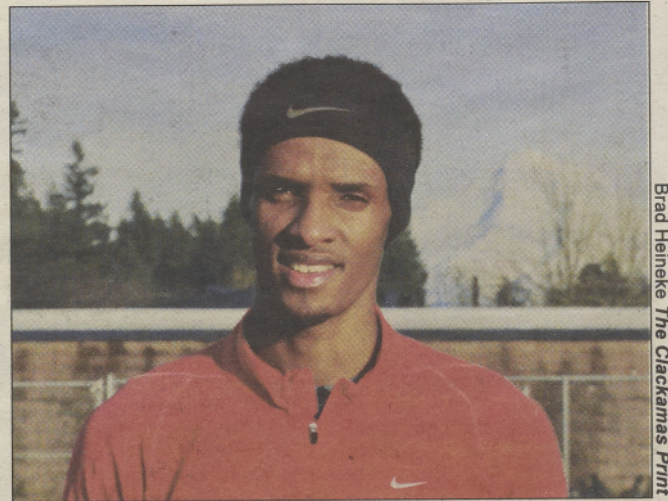
Sultessa knows what he wants and he has set his goals high. "My goal is run at a Division I school, in the 800 and 1,500," said Sultessa. "I don't know where, but definitely Division I."

It helps that Sultessa has a talented team around him. Sultessa and sophomore teammate Austin Collins, from Colton, were both within striking distance of the school record in the 800-meters last season, running 1:51.33 and 1:51.67 respectively. Those are the second and fourth fastest times in CCC history. The school record from 1984 is 1:50.9 by Yul Provancha.

"He's definitely got guys to work with," said Mantalas. "Badane is just a step ahead in fitness right now. If everybody stays healthy these guys can run some great times. I think Austin can break the school record in the 800 this year and Badane will probably lower it next year."

Sultessa has big plans for his final year of eligibility. "I'm not down to lose at anything during my third year," said Sultessa. "I'm not going to be scared of anybody, no matter what their times are. I'm shooting for the school records next year in the 800 and 1,500."

Those are lofty goals, as both the 800-meter and 1,500-meter school records date to 1984. The 1,500-meter record held by 1988 Olympian Brian Abshire is a scin-



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Badane Sultessa is eyeing Clackamas' school records in the 800 and 1,500 meter runs. Sultessa is redshirting this spring and will have sophomore eligibility to compete in cross country and track next year.

tillating 3:45.5, or the equivalent of 4-minute mile pace.

Sultessa has already been receiving looks from Division I schools that he covets. "It's cool to talk to schools in the Pac-12 that know who he is and what he's doing," said Mantalas. "He has the opportunity to compete in the finals of the NCAA's in a couple years with everything he's doing now and the way he's progressing."

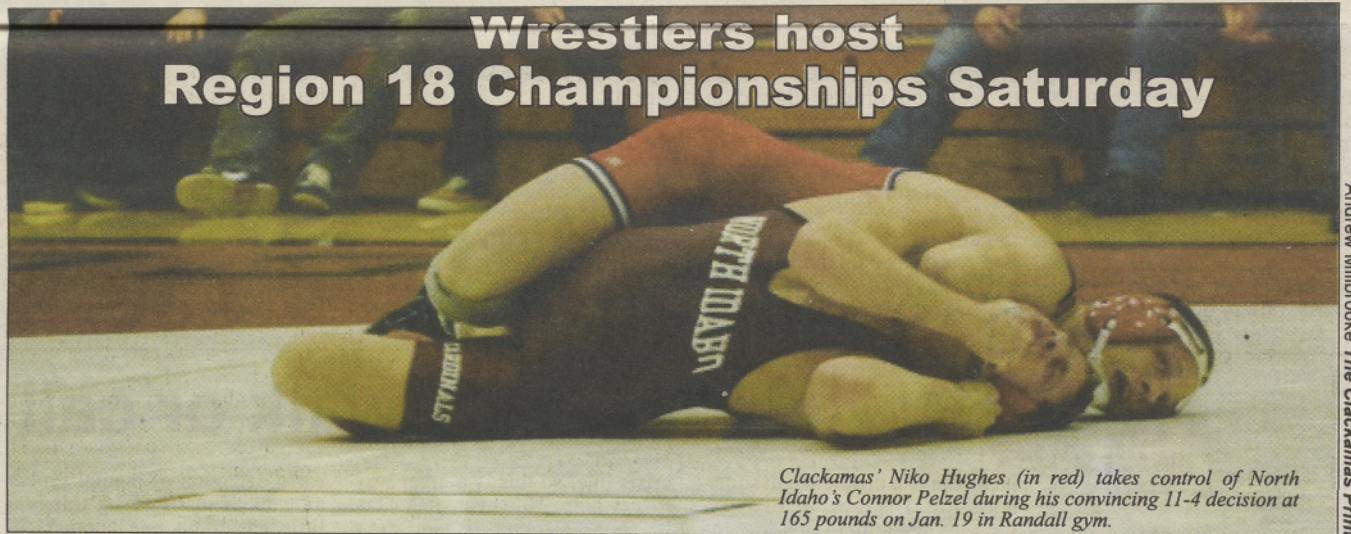
The only question for Sultessa may be at what distance he will be best. "He's definitely got a large range, as far as being able to run fast in everything from 400-meters all the way up to 8,000-meters," said Clackamas head track and field coach Keoni McHone.

In addition to his strong 800-meter time, Sultessa has run 48 seconds for 400-meters, 3:56.61 in the 1,500-meters, and 25:25 for 8,000-meters while placing fourth in the NWAACC cross country championships last fall. All of those times are fantastic for a college freshman.

McHone sees Sultessa as a future miler, while Letts thinks the 5K will be his race. Badane considers himself an 800/1,500-meter guy and Mantalas thinks he can run everything fast. It doesn't seem to matter what the distance, just know that Badane Sultessa is going to run fast.

"A year from now Badane's a different guy," said Mantalas. "I think he can run crazy fast next fall in cross country."

## Wrestlers host Region 18 Championships Saturday



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Clackamas' Niko Hughes (in red) takes control of North Idaho's Connor Pelzel during his convincing 11-4 decision at 165 pounds on Jan. 19 in Randall gym.

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The Clackamas wrestling team will be gunning for a third straight title as they host the Region 18 Championships beginning at 10 a.m. on Saturday in Randall gym. Region rivals North Idaho and Northwest College have beaten the Cougars in dual matches earlier in the season and both look capable of unseating the Cougars from their throne.

"It's awesome in the sense that you get to compete in front of friends, family and teammates," said Clackamas head coach Josh Rhoden. "But at the same point, as a coach, when we're on the road in the hotel, I have a little more control over everything. Hopefully, guys are getting the sleep they need the night before and staying focused."

Rhoden pointed out that Region 18 is the only region in the country to boast three national championship teams from the past 10 years. No. 3 Clackamas, No. 1 North Idaho and No. 7 Northwest College have com-

binated to win four of the past 12 national championships.

"Northwest College joined the region this year and they have a strong tradition of wrestling, winning the 2004 National Championship," said Rhoden. "They could get in there and make some noise as far as contending for a region title."

Rhoden talked about some of the great depth that Region 18 has in most of the weight classes.

"Our region is so good, you are going to see a lot of good matchups," said Rhoden. "The downside to that is there are some pretty good kids that don't get to go to nationals."

The top four finishers at each weight class qualify for nationals.

"We have a really deep weight class at 125 pounds," said Rhoden. "Whoever gets through there will be tough. All four of the top guys have beaten up on each other."

Beau Roberts, ranked No. 4 in the nation for Clackamas, faces a tough test in the 149 pound class, which has three of the top four ranked wrestlers in the nation.

"I'm really looking forward to it," said Roberts. "I've wrestled

all three guys who are ranked in my weight class. I'm excited to get some redemption and go in and battle with those guys."

Roberts thinks it is an advantage competing in such a tough region.

"We have the toughest guys in our region," said Roberts. "It gives us an edge, because we have to work that much harder to get out of our region to get to nationals."

### The Rivalry

The featured matchup in the region is in the 174 pound weight class.

The top two ranked wrestlers in the nation get to continue a rivalry dating to last season in the 174 pound class.

"That's obviously going to be a great one at 174, because those guys are ranked first and second in the country," said Rhoden. "Trent just got the No. 1 spot with the new ranking that came out."

Noon beat Sweedman twice last year, before losing a 1-0 match earlier this year at North Idaho. Sweedman made it to the national finals last season, settling for second place, while Noon finished fourth. Noon won

payback two weeks ago, defeating then No. 1 ranked Sweedman 3-0 in a home match to regain the top ranking.

"I beat him both times pretty good last year," said Noon. "Then I wrestled him this year at his place when I had strep throat the night before and he ended up beating me 1-0 on riding time. He caught me one time and that is not going to happen again."

Noon is confident and happy to have the top ranking going into regionals, but the pressure is on to hold on to it for nationals.

"It's not pressure; it's expectation to win," said Noon. "I like having the No. 1 spot, people have to come beat me. They are more worried about me than I am about them. That's the way I look at it."

Noon did give his props to Sweedman for always giving him a tough match.

"He's been tough, he's long and lanky like I am," said Noon. "When we get in a scramble for position, he can roll around with me just as well as I can roll with him, so that is what makes our matches so good."