



STEVE TANNEN
Feature Writer
DUCKS ILLUSTRATED

August to March Express

Not many college football and hoop fans get the best of both worlds. Gridiron powers like Nebraska, Florida State and Miami don't usually get it done on the hardwood. Recent history shows Oregon in a pretty elite class with Oklahoma, Florida, Texas and a handful of others. Remember, on the heels of the '94 Rose Bowl run, the Jerry Green coached gang led by Orlando Williams and Kenya Wilkins broke a 34-year Big Dance drought. Fact is, when the Ducks made back-to-back appearances in the tourney in '60 & '61 with guys like Denny Strickland, Glenn Moore & Charlie Warren, it wasn't quite March Madness.

The now second fiddle N.I.T. carried as much prestige. Few universities experience the mania witnessed here from the autumn of '01 through the following spring. Joey and the footballers trounce Colorado to open '02 then on the second day of spring Ernie's guys sneak by Texas to qualify for the Elite 8! Now it's late '03 and Mr. Bellotti has guided his club through some turbulent waters into a significant bowl game versus a tough Big 10 team and the stylish Mr. Kent has his team primed for a 3rd consecutive visit to the field of 64. The thing I took away from the loss to Kansas was the play of Aaron Brooks. The rookie point man went 4 of 16, but who cares! He showed some serious brass! With the Jayhawk defense at times denying any clean looks, Brooks displayed a willingness to take it strong to the rack or keep the defense honest from downtown. He knocked down a pair of 3's, grabbed half a dozen rebounds and ran the offense well. With apologies to JJ Walker of 70's sitcom "Good Times"

fame, this is Kid Dynamite. I think he'll develop at a slightly accelerated rate than Luke Ridnour as Rid, the last frosh Coach Kent turned his offense over to, did not have as strong a supporting cast from the go. My primary concern is how our front line guys struggle to finish. Adam Zahn was rumored to be an athlete capable of leaping out of the gym. He, along with Short and Crosswhite must learn not to bring the ball down below the chest once they get it close to the basket. Dunk the darn thing or get fouled. Too often they've gotten swatted or stripped under the hoop.

Let's wrap with the Sun Bowl. These are the circumstances under which Oregon has thrived in recent years. A dominant run-oriented team. I know Minnesota has also had success putting it up, but like Michigan, it's been predicated on establishing themselves with Marion Barber III on the ground. They busted the 250-yard mark just 3 times this season passing. The Gophers put up 277 versus Tulsa out of the Western Athletic

Conference, 331 on Northwestern and 377 against Michigan State, the teams who ran next to last and last in pass defense in the Big 10. This is not a one-dimensional team but like Oregon State, in must pass situations, the quarterback has not excelled. If the Duck defensive coaches can do what they did against the Wolverines and Beavers, I don't expect Minny QB Asad Abdul-Khaliq to have a big day. The UM pass defense posted some solid numbers but against the upper echelon teams like Michigan and MSU they struggled and got beat. I think the Oregon balance and newfound confidence in Kellen Clemens will be an awful lot to handle. The odds-makers say the Golden Gophers are a 3-point favorite. I'll take the field goal. **O**

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