

Igor Declares for NFL Draft

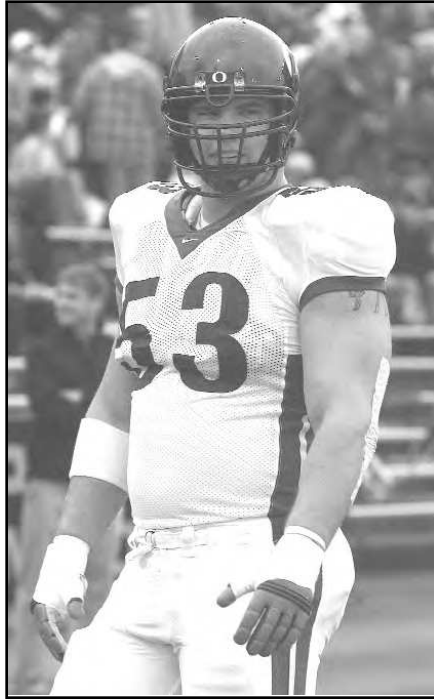
by Jerry Thompson

"I Will Be a Duck in my Heart Forever"

Despite attempts by Oregon coaches to persuade junior defensive tackle, Igor Olshansky to return for his senior year, the 6-6, 305 lb. Olshansky decided to declare himself eligible for this spring's NFL draft.

Here is the text of Olshansky's announcement to the press on Friday, January 9th:

"After extensive discussions with my family and advisors, I made the decision



to make myself available for the 2004 NFL draft. I feel I am ready for the next challenge. These last four years at Oregon have been the greatest experiences of my life and I have so many people to thank for that. I'm really going to miss Oregon. I really appreciate coach Bellotti giving me the opportunity to attend Oregon and play football, even though at that time, I was not fully qualified. I will miss my coaches, especially coach Greatwood and my teammates. I wish them great success in the future. I especially will miss my many Oregon fans whose chants of "Igor, Igor" spurred me on. Hopefully with the coaching I received at Oregon and with hard work and determination, I will hear those chants again in some distant city. I will be a Duck in my heart forever. Thank you."

Coach Bellotti shared that it was with a "heavy heart" that he will be saying goodbye to Olshansky who he said has always been a great asset to the team as a leader in the weight room, motivating other players "to exceed their own expectations." Bellotti said that Igor took on even "a greater role this year as a verbal and vocal leader on the team" and said he believed that Olshansky was one of the best defensive linemen, not only in the conference, but in the nation. "I think he is passing up the opportunity to be a first round draft choice next year, but I'm sure he will make it this year and he has my complete blessing in this. I wish him well and look forward to watching him play on Sundays," Bellotti said.

Igor said one of the biggest factors in his decision was his belief that he is "ready" for the NFL and he emphasized that it was a "whole family" decision, not

Photos by: Walt Groudoma of Walt's Photography



Igor announces his intention to enter the 2004 NFL Draft at press conference on January 9th.

one he made by himself. He acknowledged that the possibility of an injury if he had stayed for his senior year did have an impact on his decision. He said he finalized his decision after the Sun Bowl game. Olshansky said he is close to graduating from the U of O, but will have to wait until after he begins his NFL career. It is hard to say exactly where Olshansky will be chosen in the draft. Many believe that Igor will probably be making in the neighborhood of \$300,000 to \$500,000 per year, but if he had played next year and stayed healthy he would have been able to garner a contract in the multi-million dollar range.

One of the most popular players in Oregon football history, Olshansky will be missed but the cupboards are not bare in the defensive line. Igor's close friend, Haloti

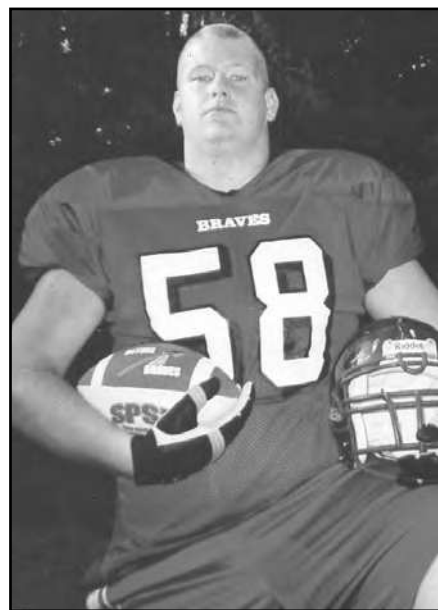
Ngata returns as a sophomore along with senior-to-be Robbie Valenzuela. Sophomores-to-be Matt Toeaina, Victor Felipe, and junior-to-be Nuvraj Bassi and the Ducks have a verbal commitment from outstanding D-lineman David Faeteete from North Medford. There is a lot of disappointment among Duck fans who were looking forward to next year with Olshansky and Ngata becoming a truly dominating duo. That was the plan this year and an injury to Ngata spoiled those plans. The uncertainty of one's health in football in the final analysis is the reason Igor is leaving. If he could look into the future and knew that he would have an injury-free senior year, Igor would be back. That's the nature of football now and the enticement the NFL offers is very difficult to turn down. **O**

Football Recruiting

by Jerry Thompson

Lineman Aaron Klovas Heads a Growing Class

If all verbal commitments turn into written ones, and there's no reason to believe otherwise, it looks like this may be the best class for offensive linemen the Ducks have signed in a long, long time. A few days after playing in the prestigious Army All-American game in San Antonio, 6-6, 300 lb. Aaron Klovas from Graham, Washington called coach Neal Zoumboukos and let him know he was going to be a Duck! Klovas is rated by Rivals.com as the #7 best prep offensive tackle in the U.S. Klovas told *DI* that he made the decision between Washington State and Oregon based upon weighing the academics first and then football. Oregon impressed him the most for taking care of him academically. Klovas' dad said that the decision process all along has been Aaron's and they (parents) let him make up his own mind. They were delighted that Aaron chose the same school they were hoping he would! Klovas is a very intelligent and personable young man and came down on his own to Eugene last Saturday, the 10th to help



6' 6", 300-lb. Aaron Klovas

persuade some of a large group of about 25 recruits to join him at Oregon.

As of press time, January 12th, it appears that Oregon may have picked up their 16th verbal in DB/WR, 5-11, 185 lb. Keenan Jones from Narbonne High School in the Los Angeles area. Many of the recruits who visited last weekend have reported to *Rivals.com* and *The Insiders.com* that they were very

impressed with Oregon. It's only about 20 days until letter-of-intent day and the Ducks were planning on adding a few more defensive linemen, and now have a even greater need since Igor Olshansky isn't coming back. Some on the "radar" who will be deciding between other schools and the Ducks are: Phillip Mbakogu, 6-2,

260 defensive end from Hayward, California, Ra' Shon Harris, 6-4, 280 lb. defensive tackle from Pittsburg, California, and Cole Linehan, 6-4, 260 lb. defensive end from Banks, Oregon. No commitments have come in from any running backs and the Ducks are still looking at more corners, safeties, and linebackers. **O**

Verbally Committed / Not Yet Signed

Name	Pos	Stars	RR	Ht/Wt	Rank	Hometown
John Bacon	LB	5.5	6-3/230	39	Lakewood, CO	
Jackie Bates	ATH	5.7	5-10/185	20	Concord, CA	
Patrick Chung	DB	5.2	6-0/189	NR	Rancho Cucamonga, CA	
Sharrod Davis	DB	5.2	5-10/170	NR	Spring Valley, CA	
David Faeteete	DT	5.9	6-2/280	12	Medford, OR	
James Harris	WR	5.1	6-2/205	NR	Roseville, CA	
Jacob Hucko	OL	5.8	6-8/285	15	Cerritos, CA	
Ryan Keeling	TE	5.5	6-5/230	26	Springfield, OR	
Jeff Kendall	OL	5.5	6-4/285	8	Colorado Springs, CO	
Aaron Klovas	OL	5.9	6-6/300	7	Graham, WA	
Mark Lewis	OL	5.2	6-5/270	NR	Arroyo Grande, CA	
Ryan Phipps	LB	5.6	6-0/210	25	Corona, CA	
Geoffrey Schwartz	OL	5.6	6-7/308	34	Pacific Palisades, CA	
Max Unger	OL	5.5	6-5/280	45	Kamuela, HI	
Jaison Williams	WR	5.6	6-4/215	43	Culver City, CA	