



JUST WEAR IT

HOW THE UO-NIKE PARTNERSHIP SET THE PACE FOR UNIFORMS IN COLLEGE SPORTS

BY BRYAN KALBROSKY

“Tradition has a scary mascot. Tradition wears three colors. Tradition practices at ‘half speed.’ Tradition milks the clock. Tradition punts on fourth down. Tradition eats turkey on Thanksgiving. Tradition never changes. Champions do.”

Embalazened on the wall of the University of Oregon Moshofsky Center — the first indoor practice facility on the West Coast — this mantra calling for the complete abandonment of tradition could have been written about the Ducks uniforms.

The Nike-Ducks partnership has revolutionized the cycle of change for uniforms in college athletics. During the 2013 season, Oregon wore seven unique jerseys and six unique helmet and pant designs — compare this to the one home jersey and one away jersey from the pre-Nike games of the early '90s.

For the UO, change has become the tradition. Long-established institutions like the University of Alabama or Notre Dame, both with more than a dozen National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) football championships, have established tradition over generations. But since the UO founded its football program in 1894, the Ducks have yet to win a championship. Before Oregon unexpectedly won the conference and made it to the 1995 Rose Bowl, UO had won just three postseason games.

The uniform trend has not gone unnoticed: rapper Drake wore a black and a white Oregon football jersey and two different pairs of Nike “Oregon Ducks” Air Jordan shoes while performing in Ridgefield, Washington. And as of the Sept. 22, 2014, issue, Ducks quarterback Marcus Mariota has appeared three times in uniform on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*.

National attention to the recent changes at Oregon has already provoked countless athletes to look more critically at Eugene — despite its rainy climate and lack of football history — as a legitimate destination for collegiate recruiting. The UO’s innovative uniforms coupled with hundreds of millions of dollars in athletic infrastructure has helped increase worldwide exposure to the Ducks.

“What Oregon stands for is not standing for anything,” Paul Lukas, a columnist who writes about uniform design for ESPN.com, tells *EW*. “They have created an air of anticipation so that, if they wear the same thing two or three weeks in a row, that is seen almost as a betrayal by some people. That is what Oregon stands for: constant change.”

IN 2013, OREGON RAISED OVER \$200,000 FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS BY AUCTIONING OFF PINK UNIFORMS FOR THE KAY YOW FOUNDATION. HERE TROY HILL WEARS PINK AT THE OCT. 2, 2014, GAME.

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