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ROSE BOWL

This is no consolation prize for Oregon's Nick Aliotti

Ducks' defensive coordinator remembers what it was like for UCLA in 1998.

By Chris Dufresne and Kevin Baxter

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Oregon defensive coordinator **Nick Aliotti** is happy to be back in a Rose Bowl his team is happy to be in.

That wasn't entirely the case after the 1998 season, the conclusion to Aliotti's one-year stint with UCLA, when the Bruins became the first team in history to arrive in Pasadena kicking and screaming.

"It was more like a consolation game," Aliotti recalled this week.

You can thank the Bowl Championship Series for that.

UCLA was knocked into the Rose Bowl after a gut-wrenching, 49-45 defeat at Miami cost **Bob Toledo's** team a trip to the Fiesta Bowl to play in the first BCS title game.

Winning the Pacific 10 Conference title and earning a Rose Bowl bid is usually the stuff of dreams, not nightmares.

"All I remember is feeling so terrible after the Miami game," Aliotti said.

Aliotti's defense had been maligned all season, but especially in the Miami game. UCLA entered the Rose Bowl game against Wisconsin as the high-powered offense at war with the war-torn defense.

Not surprisingly, the Bruins lost to the Badgers, 38-31, yet it is the Miami game UCLA fans remember most.

Looking back, Aliotti recalls how young his defense was and how many future NFL stars Miami had.

"Little did we know at the time that the running back was **Edgerrin James**, the tight end was **Bubba Franks** and the two receivers were **Santana Moss** and **Reggie Wayne**," Aliotti said.

Aliotti's season in Westwood was not his favorite. After serving as defensive coordinator for Oregon's Rose Bowl team of 1994, he left to join **Rich Brooks** with the St. Louis Rams.

Aliotti said he turned the UCLA job down twice and took it only because his wife wanted to get back to the West Coast.

"She cried all night, 'Please get me out of St. Louis,' " Aliotti recalled this week.

He said it was the first and last job he will take because of his wife. "But I love my wife," he added.

Aliotti missed another Rose Bowl chance in 2001 when Oregon won the Pac-10 but had to play in the Fiesta Bowl because the Rose was hosting that year's BCS title game.

Aliotti is thrilled to be back this week, leading the Ducks' resilient defense against Ohio State.

This won't be like 1998.

"That game was different," Aliotti said. "It did not have the same feel as my first one, the Fiesta Bowl or this one."

That's the ticket

The demand for tickets to Friday's game has driven online prices as high as \$1,000, according to national ticket broker StubHub, which has resold more than 1,800 tickets in the last week. Only next week's BCS championship game, with an average StubHub price of \$988, is outperforming the Oregon-Ohio State showdown.

Plant therapy

First-year Oregon Coach **Chip Kelly** has adopted a number of novel techniques to inspire his team, from morning practices to Friday night movies dubbed with motivational -- and often humorous -- dialogue.

One idea Kelly hopes sticks with his players is something he calls "watering the bamboo," after a similarly named motivational book by former Oregon basketball player **Greg Bell**.

"The basic premise is that if you water the bamboo for the first year, nothing happens. If you water it for the second year, nothing happens," said Kelly, whose players all wear green "Water the Bamboo" bracelets. "But if you water it for the fourth year, it will grow 90 feet in six weeks."

"The whole concept is that if you continue to put your time in and do what you're supposed to do from a work standpoint, at some point in time you're going to get a chance to harvest that."

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