

WINNER OF SEVEN PULITZER PRIZES

## Oregon reaping what Kelly has sown



Thomas Boyd/The Oregonian

"Win the Day," Chip Kelly has coached his players to believe, by "Watering the Bamboo."

LOS ANGELES –

The first time Oregon coach Chip Kelly picked up a copy of "Water The Bamboo" by motivational speaker and organizational consultant Greg Bell, Kelly didn't know anything about the author.

He didn't know that Bell played basketball at Oregon for four seasons at the end of Jim Haney's tenure and the beginning of Don Monson's.

Kelly didn't know Bell went to high school in Portland, graduated from college and law school at Oregon and remained such a UO fan that he paid his way to the 1995 Rose Bowl from Lawrence, Kan., where he was living at the time.

"It's crazy," Bell said. "I do 80 or 90 programs all over the country every year. I'm fascinated that it was the Oregon coach who picked up the concept and went with it."

In fact, Bell hadn't realized just how far Kelly had gone until he returned home to Portland from a workshop in St. Louis shortly after Oregon's 37-33 Civil War victory over Oregon State.

"My e-mail," he said, "had blown up."

UO running back LaMichael James had attempted to explain the concept in a post-Civil War interview with a group of reporters. Between James' Texas accent and the contextual misunderstanding about how watering bamboo applied to a college football game, there were blank looks and puzzled follow-up questions.

The concept is this:

Achievement comes from effort applied long before results can be seen. Bell likens it to watering timber bamboo plants that don't break ground for three to four years after the seeds sprout. But if the plant has been watered faithfully, once it gets to the surface it often grows as much as 90 feet in 60 days.

Kelly, who has a weakness for motivational slogans, loved the image. Now Kelly's players "Win The Day" by "Watering The Bamboo."

A cynic might suggest both are easier to accomplish when you "Tackle The Quarterback" or "Block The Linebacker." But Bell, who went from working as a lawyer at the Bonneville Power Administration to becoming the guiding force behind the popular "Coaches vs. Cancer" fundraiser, is onto something.

In his book, Bell outlines 21 steps that begin with a values-centered base, and include vision, hard work, discipline, commitment and a trust that dogged persistence ultimately will pay large dividends.

He didn't write the book for coaches. He mostly works with organizational leaders. But the principles are universal.

"You see people in their lives, their work, their marriages, who put in work for years, then quit right before it pays off," Bell said.

Gonzaga basketball coach Mark Few, who roomed with Bell for a while when both were in school in Eugene, is a believer.

Kelly found Bell's philosophy in-tune with his own, which is why he preaches it to his players.

And, really, almost any successful college football team has to believe in the concept, whether the players know about the growth patterns of timber bamboo or not.

The Rose Bowl might be played on Jan. 1, but the players' work begins with agility drills and weightlifting the previous winter, continues through spring practice, unsupervised summer workouts and the 12-game grind of a regular season.

If you want instant gratification, the concept isn't for you. The sport probably isn't either.

Bell teaches that the long-term payoff is worth both the work and the wait.

Kelly's career is an example. He spent 13 years coaching and refining his option-based, spread offense at New Hampshire before moving to Oregon as offensive coordinator in 2007. Two years later, he is piloting the UO program to Pasadena.

"People say Chip Kelly is an overnight success," Bell said, laughing. "Well, is he? He has quite a story."

Ditto for Few.

"He took the Gonzaga job for \$1,000 a month and was sleeping on somebody's couch," Bell said. "Look at him now."

At Oregon, the message seems to have taken. The Ducks overcame a horrendous 2009 opener at Boise State, the aftermath of LeGarrette Blount's Smurf Turf meltdown and a late season hiccup at Stanford all by keeping their heads down and putting in the work, day after day after day.

After the Civil War, once Kelly learned of Bell's Oregon ties, he invited him to address the team.

At a recent practice, quarterback Jeremiah Masoli was photographed sporting a "Water the Bamboo" wristband.

In his post-Civil War interview session, James talked about winning the Rose Bowl. That would be the cue for some players to mention going to Disneyland. Not James.

"After that game," the UO running back said, "we'll water the bamboo some more."



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