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Ducktionary

OR, WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OREGON'S FOOTBALL TEAM

If you're not normally a college football fan but figured, what the heck, you can be one for a single night — say Monday, when Oregon plays Auburn for the national championship, for example — you'll need to know some basics about the unbeaten Ducks and the program's history. And we're here to help — unless you've decided to become an Auburn fan for a night. This won't help you with that.

By Ed Madrid THE OREGONIAN

→ CHIP KELLY: Most conversations about the Ducks start with Kelly, the charismatic head coach who came to Eugene from New Hampshire. Yes, New Hampshire, that hotbed of college football. And he wasn't even the head coach there, but had gained a reputation for his innovative offense (see next item). Kelly runs a tight ship and has been recognized this season with multiple coach of the year honors. He once sculpted a heart out of snow and gave it to Oregonian videographer Molly Blue, which means something, but we're not sure what.

SPREAD OFFENSE: This no-huddle offense is designed to extend a defense and open several seams to exploit. Kelly has revolutionized it in his four years in Eugene and the Ducks have become one of the fastest-playing teams in college football, leaving him often getting on referees to place the ball faster after a play ends so his team can get back to work (and believe us, you'll hear about this — a lot — on Monday night). Kelly is regarded as such an expert on the spread that former NFL head coach Jon Gruden, a Super Bowl winner with Tampa Bay, once spent a week learning the approach from him.

CHIPISMS: The all-business coach rarely gets off-message with the media and, by extension, rarely do his players (defensive back Cliff Harris being a notable exception). Here are a couple of his, shall we say, mantras:

WIN THE DAY: Provides the philosophical underpinning of this Ducks team. It's on the walls of Autzen Stadium and throughout the football offices. Kelly says it applies to everything from how players make their beds to how they practice to what they eat at night. Monday, in the national championship game, it will appear in its condensed form — WTD — in small type that runs down the center stripe of each player's helmet.



WATER THE BAMBOO: This is actually from motivational speaker Greg Bell, an Oregon graduate. In essence, Bell says, achievement comes from effort applied long before results can be seen, such as 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. However, you won't see WTB on any Ducks helmets. We think.

AUTZEN STADIUM: Where the Ducks play their home games.

"IT NEVER RAINS IN AUTZEN STADIUM": The line routinely delivered at each home game by Don Essig, who has been the announcer at Autzen Stadium for all but five quarters of football the Ducks have played since 1968. The line is so known to Ducks fans it appears as a graphic in the bathroom tile patterns of UO's John E. Jaqua Academic Center for Student Athletes (where, we assume, it also never rains).

✓ PHIL KNIGHT: UO grad, Nike founder and big-time supporter of Ducks athletics. Take a stroll across the UO campus and you'll find a library named after his family, a law school named after his father and a new basketball arena named for his late son.

TEAMS TO HATE: The Ducks' in-state rival is Oregon State, and hatred of the Beavers comes naturally for most Ducks fans. The two teams play at the end of every season in the Civil War. Some Ducks fans might argue that dislike of the Washington Huskies runs just as deep.

FAKE INJURY STRATEGY: Oregon's offense plays so quickly that opponents often can't get set in time for the next play. The issue came to a head in the Cal game when Bears defensive line coach Tosh Lupoi instructed a player to fake an injury to slow down Oregon. Lineman Aaron Tipoti was caught on camera in a comical display that was lampooned on numerous talk shows on radio and television. Two weeks later, Lupoi was suspended for one game after admitting to the move which, while not something that draws a penalty flag, is considered less than ethical.

↓ DUCKS MASCOT: Also known as Puddles. Puddles doesn't speak, but made a name for himself by pummeling the Houston Cougars' mascot in '09. And he's had almost as much airtime as many of the players this season, with TV cameras on him as he does push-ups for each of the (many, many, many) points the Ducks score.

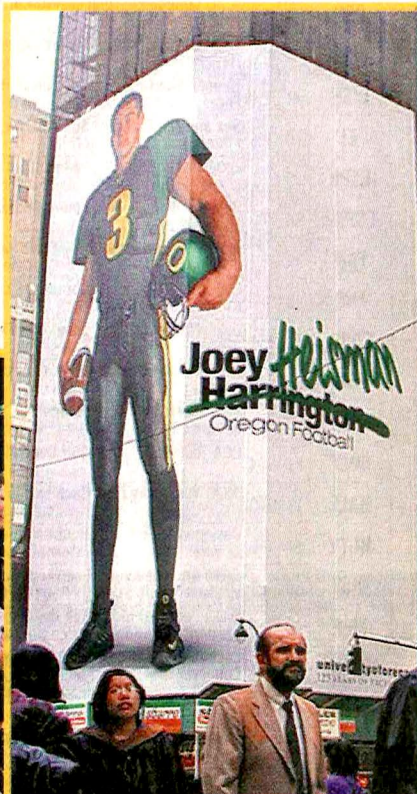
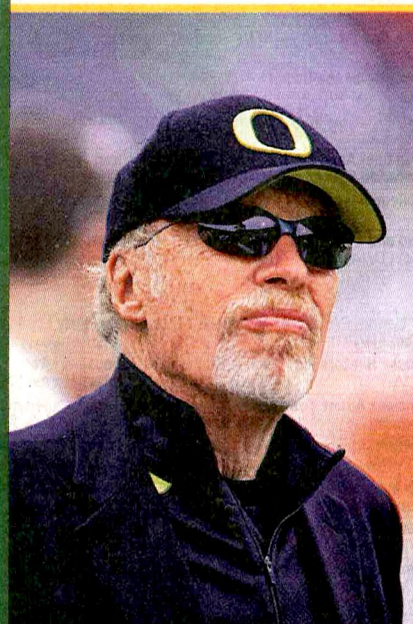
MICKY WARD: Former boxing champ from Lowell, Mass., whose

life is depicted in "The Fighter." On the night before Oregon's 60-13 win over UCLA, Kelly made a point to the team by showing a video of the ninth round, known as the "Round of the Century," of the first 2002 fight between Ward and Arturo Gatti. Then Ward, an old New England buddy of Kelly's, walked in as the lights came on and hammered home the point that a football season is like a title fight (but not the second Liston-Ali fight, where Liston fell apparently without being hit), with round after round of battles.

HEISMAN TROPHY: The Heisman Trophy is a 25-pound bronze statue depicting a football player from the 1930s in a hilariously melodramatic pose, one repeated numerous times in football end zones by publicity-hungry players. It's awarded each year to the most outstanding player in college football, as voted upon by previous recipients and sports journalists around the country. LaMichael James was a finalist this year (he finished third), but lost out to Auburn quarterback Cam Newton.

↓ JOEY HEISMAN: In 2001, Oregon ran an ad campaign promoting quarterback Joey Harrington, a Heisman contender. The centerpiece for the campaign was an enormous billboard outside Madison Square Garden. He finished fourth in the voting.

THE PICK: Before Chip, before Joey Heisman, there was "The Pick," a play from a 1994 game against the highly ranked (and, as we said earlier, much disliked) Washington Huskies. Kenny Wheaton made a key late-game interception with the Huskies driving, and he scored to propel the Ducks to the Rose Bowl that year, a huge step for the program.



For an online version of this — including a video of "The Pick" — and so very much more on the Oregon-Auburn game, go to oregonlive.com/ducks

PHOTOS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS and THOMAS BOYD/THE OREGONIAN (far left)