

Oregon Baseball Back in Business

Written by Devon Teeple
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For the first time in 28 years, the "ping" sound is returning to Eugene, Oregon. The [Oregon Ducks](#) are traveling to Moraga, California to battle the [Gaels of St. Mary's](#).

The Ducks are lead by [George Horton](#), who was previously the Head Coach of [Cal State Fullerton](#) for the past 11 seasons. In his tenure there, Horton lead his team to the College World Series six times, won the National Title in 2004, and was named National Coach of the Year twice.

Since there has not been an Oregon baseball team in nearly three decades, it has been quite a journey to get this project of the ground. The program has been built from the ground up in just 17 short months, by constructing a team of 35 players including 20 freshmen.

Horton is optimistic on this upcoming season, "I'm pretty spoiled and pretty confident in myself and my staff," he said. "We've got good athletes here. It's just a question of whether they believe they're good enough. I think if they stay in character, from what I've seen, I do believe we have a chance to be competitive."

On the other hand, his players are realistic. "There's going to be games where we get beat by 12 or so maybe, but we're going to come back and punch back and make sure it doesn't keep happening over and over," freshman second baseman Danny Pulfer said. "We'll take lumps this year, but we're also going to put on some lumps."

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The popularity of baseball in Oregon will not be a problem, but the team still has many issues in front of them. Finding a home to play in is one. Previously, the Ducks played in Howe Field, which was built in 1936, and stood until 1987 when it was renovated to suit the softball team. In August, a new \$18 million dollar stadium built near [Autzen Stadium](#) began. When complete, the stadium will hold up to 4,000 people. The first phase of construction was complete in time so the Ducks could host their home-opener against defending National Champion, [Fresno State](#)

. Upon completion of the season, the second phase of construction begins when the temporary bleachers are replaced by a permanent grandstand.

According to Yahoo Sports, Oregon's decision to bring back baseball to Oregon was not without its headaches. "To make room, the Ducks discontinued their wrestling program following the 2007-08 season and added varsity women's competitive cheer. Proponents for the wrestling team filed a lawsuit against the school, which was dismissed last October. Supporters of Oregon wrestling included a son of author Ken Kesey, himself a former wrestler. Some also questioned varsity competitive cheer, which is not recognized as an NCAA sport. The team has not yet started competition and is separate from the school's cheerleaders and dance squad."

Overall, enthusiasm and hope are back in Oregon in their return to PAC-10 baseball as the memories of the [Oregon State Beavers](#) and their back-to-back National Championships are still in the air. With 31 NCAA Division 1 conferences, the

[Pac-10](#)
is currently
[ranked 3rd](#)

in the nation. The Ducks are indeed in for an adventure but as Coach Horton sees it, this is a challenge he is looking forward to. "Although we're young," he said, "we're looking forward to matching up our team with the other teams and seeing where we're at."

MORE ON THE RETURN OF BASEBALL TO U of O:

[Baseball Returns to U of O After 26-Year Absence](#)

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