

Eggers: Good rivalry 'fun for everybody'

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seasons, the luster has faded. Hatfield would like to think Nike can play some role in helping the Beavers get back to where they were playing for the Rose Bowl in 2008 and '09. "A downturn can happen quickly, and the upturn is always way slower," he says. "That's just the way life is in a lot of things. "From my perspective — and Phil Knight says this, too — a rising tide floats all boats. You get a rivalry going, it's good for business, it's good for competition, it's good for esprit d'corps. We'd like to keep these two programs at each other's throats to make it fun for everybody."

Fitting together
The Nike folks seem to be winning over the Beaver doubters with their approach to the difference between the schools.

"We try to understand the culture and history of the institution, and what are your plans for the future, and then tailor what we can do from marketing and design perspective to fit that," Hatfield says. "We don't just dream stuff up that isn't appropriate."

For marketing, design and other innovative work for Oregon, Nike has identified what it feels is the fabric of the school and the athletic program. "We've done things to change over their presentation from that of a typical collegiate program to something that's more futuristic," Hatfield says. "We've had the leeway to be more avant-garde with Oregon."

Hatfield envisions Oregon State's image as something different, not unlike that of a pair of Nike schools — Michigan State and Oklahoma State.

"Like Oregon State, they're in a smaller city, working really hard to be competitive," Hatfield says. "They're interested in amping up their ability to speak to young people and recruits and present themselves as (an athletic program) on the rise."

Hatfield uses uniform designs as an example.

"With Oklahoma State, it's not the sort of Flash Gordon, off-to-the-future stuff we did for Oregon," Hatfield says. "What we have is new and cool and high-tech, but we have maintained a certain amount of the classic look. That's what we would do for Oregon State."

"We've told the Oregon State people, 'You should have the latest in everything. You should be able to tell your recruits and current players, your alumni and fans that you have all the latest stuff, the best equipment, the best facilities, the best marketing programs — all of those things. But it's all built around the truth of what Oregon State stands for.'"

Hatfield eschews the "liberal" and "conservative" stereotypes of Oregon and Oregon State.

"The right words for Oregon State are classic and traditional," he says. "Oregon State attracts more in-state students. It's more about the region, with forestry, marine science, agriculture and engineering. The Ducks' image is more like his hurry-up offense — unconven-



Nike executive Tinker Hatfield (below) says Oregon State "should have the latest in everything," and if the university elects to work with the company Hatfield says he would like to see the Beavers go with a "classic" and "traditional" approach to their look. Perhaps something along the lines of the uniform that quarterback Ryan Katz (above) and OSU wore for the 2010 Civil War game against Oregon.

"We don't want Oregon State to be uncool. We think the clean, tough-guy approach is Oregon State's image — sort of like Penn State. It's about working hard, nose-to-the-grindstone."

— Tinker Hatfield



tional, all over the place. It's cool, they're successful, but it's not like everybody should do that."

St. Claire's Nike group seeks out likely partners that include such universities as Michigan State, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M, West Virginia and Boise State — schools in the same mold as Oregon State.

"These are universities that are interested in upgrading their image, their brand," Hatfield says. "We think of Oregon as a branded entity. 'Brand' is a very powerful word. It's all about communicating to others about who you are and how cool you are, quite frankly. Oregon's been successful, because it's all about nontraditional stuff and the future."

"We build relationships with certain schools that are interested. Some, like Texas, are in the 'don't fix what's-not-broken' mold. Others have had success but may not have the brand equity yet. That's what we're talking about with Oregon State."

At Oregon, Nike began with the redesign of the logo, a different color scheme and the off-the-wall uniforms. At Oregon

State, Hatfield's personal preference is to return to the "OSU" logo and go from there. "The 'OS' was well-designed, but really, Oregon State's image should be more classic and more traditional, with a twist, and not try to be something they're not," Hatfield says. "Oregon's (logo) was like a moon shot, but it works in Eugene. There are a lot of people in Eugene who think it's terrible, but there's enough momentum behind it to allow it to work."

"You brand Oregon State as a more traditional entity and also more about the state of Oregon. That's part of what Oregon State's all about — very powerful stuff. Oregon State football has traditionally been a little more down the fairway."

"We're not going to try to spread you out. We're going to come at you. We're going to hit hard, block and tackle."

"It all starts to fit together. You can build a powerful image around that, keep everybody happy yet make it beautiful and appealing to recruits, and alumni will love it. When you do it right, you become more nationally known, which doesn't hurt recruiting, either."

In 2010, Nike used Oregon State and Oregon in its "rivalry program" along with seven or eight other schools nationally. For the Civil War, the company put the Beavers in a uniform reminiscent both Dee Andros' "Giant Killers" and the Tommy Prothro "Black Bandits of Benton County" — black uniforms, orange numbers, black helmets with an orange stripe down the middle, undershirts with an identical stripe on the sleeve.

"Classic, tough-looking uniforms, but also with the new componentry for this era," Hatfield says. "The difference between Oregon State and Oregon couldn't have been more striking in that game. The Beavers were classic with a twist. The Ducks were all feathers and metallic and carbon-fibered helmets. We took the Beaver, the cartoon script, of the (OSU) helmets. They were clean and black."

"They were both cool in their own way. That's what we want. We don't want Oregon State to be uncool. We think the clean, tough-guy approach is Oregon State's image — sort of like Oregon State. It's about working hard, nose-to-the-grindstone."

In Nike's think tank are ideas

for that "visual hook" for the Beavers, something along the lines of Tennessee's checkerboard end zone.

"With Oregon State, there are a lot of things you could be inspired by," Hatfield says. "If you're about hard work, showing up on time, a more blue-collar approach... maybe you explore something with the waffle-like texture of a Beaver's tail."

Hatfield isn't being wholly altruistic here. He wants Oregon State to help Nike sell more merchandise, which helps both the school and the company. "What's most important is we are inspired by the character and culture of the institution," he says. "We want to do what's right. When we get it right, things take off. People see it become successful, and then you sell more replica jerseys, because there's an honest, authentic story behind it that represents institutionally who you are."

"Oregon State is struggling a little bit to understand that what we do. There's a perception we are just like wild and crazy and doing weird stuff. That couldn't be further from the truth. Things are carefully

planned. We have programs around the country that are good examples of how it works."

Much of Nike's plan has to do with attracting both recruits and young fans, who wind up following the university's teams for decades if things go well.

"Traditionally, for instance, coaches picked the uniforms and alumni had their say," Hatfield says. "It never used to be about what the athletes wanted. You have to find a balance, but we heavily weight it with our successful programs to what we think you people will be attracted."

At Oregon, a football recruit is told if he comes to the school, he can be part of a team that helps design a uniform he'll wear on game day before he graduates. Could Nike offer Oregon State such an inducement to its prospective athletes?

"We could," Hatfield says. "That's a part of the equation. The kids like it, because they're a part of it."

Hatfield, like Riley and De Carolis, knows all of this works effectively only with a winning program. But Hatfield believes Nike can offer a helping hand to the Beavers, just as it did with the Ducks, in elevating to the next level.

"The Nike exec emphasizes the company would be working in collaboration with Oregon State, not trying to tell athletic department officials what to do."

"We've helped Oregon with a recruiting tool and a way to tell people what they're all about," he says. "We want to help find something apropos for Oregon State, too."

It sounds good to both Riley and De Carolis.

"Tinker is a great person, great at what he does, and it's fun to be associated with him," Riley says. "Nike's the best in the world at what they do. Their intentions are sincere in wanting to be more involved with us. That's encouraging. My hope is we consider this opportunity strongly."

Oregon State and Nike recently signed an eight-year merchandising contract.

"We're getting a large amount of product, and now we're in their graphic identity group."

De Carolis says. "We're trying to figure out what our branding image is and how that ties into a new logo. Wherever it leads, it probably won't be launched until the 2013 football season."

"They're the best sports marketing company on the face of the planet. To be aligned with them is great. We'll see what they come up with. Some of the things we like; we're trying to make sure it all fits together. I just need to have a little more structure to the process."

"You can't influence every single demographic group. It is about recruiting, taking it to retail, to Beaver Nation — what is it? Whatever it is, I'm sure it'll be powerful. Those different uniforms and helmets, that stuff's all slick. But if you don't win in the field, it doesn't do much good."

Hatfield and his Nike group intends to meet with De Carolis and Riley after Feb. 1 national letter-of-intent signing day.

The Beavers can't pass on this opportunity. They need to embrace Hatfield's overture and run with it, before it's gone.

PORTLAND ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

Celebrating individual performances and team contributions made by Portland high school and college students

STEPHEN HOLT

Saint Mary's College | Basketball

A 6-4 sophomore guard from Jesuit High, Holt helped the No. 23 Gaels (17-2, 6-0 West Coast Conference) knock off Gonzaga and Portland. He tied his career high with 21 points against the Pilots. In the two games, he totaled 34 points, 12 rebounds, 11 assists and five steals. He is shooting 52 percent from the field this season. "He's a really big competitor," coach Randy Bennett says. "He knows how to win and has been really good for us this year. He has become a good scoring guard. He does it all."



MARRISA BELIEI

Portland Christian High School | Basketball

The 5-6 senior point guard has helped the No. 4 Royals jump to 7-0 record in the Class 2A Northwest League and 14-2 overall record. A four-year letter winner, Beliei averages 8.5 points, 4.5 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 3.2 steals per contest. "She's an excellent 3-point shooter," Royals coach Kim Newman says. "You need players like Marissa. She's one of our top players. There is a quiet leadership about her, and she's a great mentor to her younger teammates. She leads with intensity and sense of humor."



DANNY BRAKEBUSH

Central Catholic High School | Basketball

Brakebush, a 6-3 senior guard, scored 15 points as the No. 2 Rams beat No. 1 Jesuit 59-47 last week on the road. "He's fun to coach," Rams coach Dan Munson says. After coming off the bench last season, "he had a bit of a chip on his shoulder." Brakebush is averaging 20 points per game. "He's a product of how we're playing," Munson says. "He can shoot it and make big shots in big situations, especially when the game is close. He has become better on the defensive end — he wants to get better and he has."



TERRENCE ROSS

University of Washington | Basketball

Ross, who helped lead Jefferson to three consecutive 5A state championships, was a big force for the Huskies last week as they put themselves solidly into the Pac-12 race. Ross, a 6-6 sophomore guard, had a career-high 30 points and 14 rebounds in UW's 75-65 win over Washington State. He had 20 points in the second half, going 8 of 12 from the field, including 5 of 8 from 3-point range. Ross also had 12 points and six rebounds in a 91-83 victory over Seattle. His averaging 15.1 points (third on the team) and 6.6 rebounds (second).



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