

A New Beginning Continues In Oregon's Second Season

Written by Devon Teeple

Wednesday, 11 November 2009 23:10



University of Oregon's PK Park

The Oregon Ducks are preparing for their second season, one that shows promise despite a 14-42 record in '09. A record like that is a failure for some, but for the Ducks, it is a success.

The University and Eugene were without Division I baseball for the past 28 years. That is until last season. Their record may not show it, but they are in the midst of becoming a power in the continuously daunting PAC-10.

[PK Park](#) , Oregon's new home, built near nostalgic [Autzen Stadium](#) , is to be fully completed by the home opener March 2, 2010. The \$15-\$18 million stadium will seat approximately 3,200 fans, with 2,600 chairback seats in the main seating bowl. .

"It looks amazing," said Darrell Hunter, who is part of the Ducks' inaugural class. "Just looking at their football and basketball facilities, you know their baseball stadium is going to be pretty sweet."

George Horton took over this team, a team that one could not compare to his Cal State Fullerton squad that he lead to the College World Series six times, won the National Title in 2004, and was named the National Coach of the Year twice. On the other hand, a coach of his caliber knows that a rebuilding period takes time, and in some instances, a College World Series caliber team is built around pitching. With great pitching comes a stadium that is advantageous to the teams' style of play.

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"It's conducive to the style of baseball that my staff and I prefer to play," Horton said. "You don't make your way to the College World Series without great pitchers and it's hard to convince pitchers to come to a place where the ballpark plays too small."

Their journey begins February 19, 2010 at Horton's old stomping grounds, Cal State Fullerton. According to the Ducks website, they are set to play three more games that weekend against Long Beach, Pepperdine and Loyola Marymount. From there, a 4-game tilt against Hawai'i before the return trip to Eugene to unveil PK Park.

"We are very excited to announce the 2010 schedule," head coach [George Horton](#) said. "The quality of teams we are bringing in, along with our spectacular new stadium, will create a fantastic atmosphere for the Eugene community to experience collegiate baseball. We are looking forward to opening up the brand new PK Park on March 2-3 against the Huskies."

A new stadium, a new outlook, and a recruiting class that was ranked 24th in the nation by Baseball America's evaluation of NCAA Division I baseball classes. That says something about this team, this university, and the way they are viewed by the rest of the baseball fraternity.

"We are very pleased with the quality of the 17 athletes that joined our program in the 2009-10 academic year," head coach George Horton said. "I commend both coach [Andrew Checketts](#) and coach [Mike Kirby](#)

for their hard work and instincts. The class is laden with immediate and upside abilities that should impact the improvement of our young program. The class is talented and their aptitude seems very special in the early evaluation process. This class has also impressed us with their potential to become leadership players during their careers, and they are also outstanding young men. We all think this will be an extremely productive group."

A conference championship, and a College World Series berth may be years away, but with their last two recruiting classes in the top 25 of the country, a state-of-the-art stadium, and a coach with a history of winning, the Ducks may rise to the top of the rankings quicker than you might think.

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