



Doug Oxsen Oral History Interviews, December 30, 2015

Title

“Raising the Bar for OSU Athletics”

Date

December 30, 2015

Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

Interview #2 begins with Oxsen's broader memories of his basketball career at Oregon State. These memories include the quality of play in the Pac-8 during Oxsen's years as a competitor, the knee injury that he suffered during his freshman year, and the contrasts that he has observed between the culture of basketball during that era with what evolved later on. A major topic of conversation is Oxsen's recollections of playing against Bill Walton's UCLA Bruins and Oregon State's upset of UCLA in 1975, a win that broke UCLA's 49-game conference winning streak. He likewise comments on his interactions with Bill Walton in later years, as well as other noteworthy players against whom he competed.

The session then shifts its focus to Oxsen's life following his graduation from OSU. These reflections include a discussion of Oxsen's two years touring the world with the Athletes in Action Christian ministry; his brief stint playing professionally in England; and his private sector work with Universal Gym Equipment and the BikeE Corporation.

The remainder of the interview is chiefly devoted to Oxsen's return to OSU and his activities as a fundraiser with the OSU Foundation. Specifically, Oxsen details his involvement with the Raising Reser project as well as the construction of the Basketball Practice Facility, the launch of the Everyday Champions program, and the revival of track and field as an intercollegiate sport at Oregon State.

Oxsen's interview concludes with thoughts on future Athletics development projects at OSU, notes on family and hobbies, and words of advice for students of today.

Interviewee

Doug Oxsen

Interviewer

Mike Dicianna

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/oxsen/>

Transcript

Mike Dicianna: OK, today is Wednesday, December 30th, 2015, and this is going to be the second interview session to capture the story of Doug Oxsen, OSU Class of 1985. My name is Mike Dicianna. I'm an oral historian with the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project, and we're in the Valley Library here on the OSU campus.

Thank you again for sharing your story with the Beaver Nation and we're going to pick up where we left off last summer. Basically, during our first interview, you shared some absolute golden memories about Coach Miller. I'd like to turn our focus back onto your career here at OSU and then after also. Now, your years on the team, the basketball program here, were eventful to say the least. You lettered in '73, '74, and '75?

Doug Oxsen: That's correct.

MD: So other than a certain game we want to talk about, what are some of your fondest memories of your time as a basketball player here in the program?

DO: Well, my whole experience, I loved it. It was just fantastic. Even the hard days were good. The freshman team, which still played when I was a freshman – I think that continued for maybe two more years or three more years after that – but that group of people that I played with as freshmen was pretty special. We were coached by Dave Leach. A little tidbit – Dave Leach is the person who guarded Bill Bradley when he set the NCAA tournament scoring record. I think it was fifty-four points or something like that. So whenever Coach Leach talked about us playing defense, we reminded him about Bill Bradley. Anyway, we had many laughs about that over the years.

But just playing with any team or group of people, there are times that are very, very special. Individual games that you remember a lot, there are certainly those. Being able to qualify for the NCAA tournament in 1975 was really a big deal. As you remember, that was the first year that they expanded the NCAA tournament from sixteen to twenty-four teams. So prior to that time, you had to win your conference in order to get into the tournament, or they had a couple of at-large places for teams like Notre Dame and things like that. So that was the first time it was expanded and, as you know, during that period of time, UCLA had a stranglehold on the Pac-8 at the time. So we finished second to UCLA that year and had the opportunity to go. And we won our first round game. So that was a big deal, because now there's sixty-eight teams, I guess, that get in. Back then, it was very difficult to even get into the tournament, so that was a big deal.

MD: The cream of the crop of all the teams.

DO: That's right. And the Pac-8, during that period of time, was arguably the best basketball conference in the country. The ACC would probably argue with us a little bit, but you had teams like USC that might have only lost two or three games a year in the late '60s, but they always lost to UCLA so they didn't go anywhere. My freshman year – you ask about a great memory – I was not on the varsity as a freshman in 1970-71, but one of the most memorable experiences was Oregon State playing Cal. And Cal ended up winning on a last second shot, and I think the score was 101 to 100 in regulation. But to my point, they had four guys off of that team that went into the NBA. So the Pac-8 at that period of time was loaded with those kinds of stories and a lot of players went on and played. So if you had success in the conference, that's a good accomplishment. And so many good thoughts and good memories of that.

MD: So that freshman year, then you ended up having – you were redshirted in '72 for knee surgery. So you just continued with your studies and rehabbed?

DO: That's right.

[0:05:00]

MD: I'm sure that rehab and the science of sports medicine has made some advances since then?

DO: Oh yeah, quite a bit different. I got an incision like that [holds fingers a few inches apart] today they'll have a couple of little pinpricks, then you're done. The recovery times were longer too, because they had to do a little more invasive work. But I was also very thin, I need to get a little stronger, so the redshirting plan was good for me anyway. I'm sorry

I had to get hurt in order to go through that, but being redshirted probably would have been something in my future anyway.

MD: Was it a game injury?

DO: I hit knees with a guy my freshman year and ended up cracking my kneecap. And eventually, where it happened was where a tendon attached to the kneecap. So eventually, you would play and it just, one day, just pulled off. And so they had to go clean that up and reattach the tendon and, like I say, I might have been out four weeks instead of eight months.

MD: So this was a program that, through Ralph Miller, was just consistent winning seasons, winning seasons, winning seasons. Can you contrast the time that you were there with some times that maybe we haven't had such a great program? What's the difference?

DO: Oh, what's the difference? You get an opportunity to play with a coach like Ralph Miller and that changes the equation, and I think that was a big difference. And I'm not saying that the other coaches weren't as good, but there aren't very many Ralph Millers. And I also think that the world changed as it related to Oregon State, as it related to all of the U.S. Back in the day, there might have been one or two games on t.v. on the weekend, or maybe UCLA showed their own games on t.v. on a tape delay basis. But there was no ESPN, there was no Internet services, there was none of the coverage, broad general coverage, that there was starting in the mid-'80s or something like that. It really made a difference.

So from that perspective, I think recruiting changed. It was harder for really good players to get exposed outside of their regional area. It was much harder to, quote, find a diamond in the rough and then develop that person. So by the time the late '80s and '90 start rolling around, some of the really good players – particularly in the Northwest or in Oregon – maybe they would say, "well shoot, I'm going to go play at Duke or Kentucky or someplace," because they had seen those teams on t.v., there was exposure to those people. You could videotape people and distribute video much, much easier. So the whole recruiting process was significantly different and I think it became a lot more competitive.

So I'm not saying that it wouldn't have happened, because you never know how it goes, but it's quite possible that Kevin Love, for example, who's from Portland, wouldn't have ended up going to UCLA. Or Singler, who was in Medford, maybe wouldn't have gone to Duke if he was in the early '70s or late '70s. It's much more possible that that player may have come to Oregon State. So that's probably not all of it, but you see that change. And you see it even more today with, now, everybody can watch everybody's game on the Internet, because right after the game, it's uploaded onto the net. So diamonds in the rough, or uncharted people, basically don't exist. So I think the whole recruiting thing made a difference.

[0:10:05]

I also think that facilities start making a difference. Oregon State, when Gill Coliseum was built in '49, I think, is when it started, it was the nicest facility west of the Mississippi. We hosted several NCAA regional tournaments. It was known. Well, over time, other people started building facilities that were significantly different, so that has an impact on the players that come or the coaches that come.

When you're used to winning, I don't know if I said this before, but when I was a freshman, on my recruiting trip, I remember seeing a sign in the basketball office and there were only three teams that had won a thousand games. And Oregon State was one of those teams that had won a thousand games. This was a program that was used to winning, we were used to having success, and you saw basketball that was played well because of the way that Ralph Miller coached and Slats Gill coached and Paul Valenti. It was good basketball. So as a player, when you saw some of the stuff that happened later on, it wasn't as good basketball. The attention to fundamentals and some of those things that were beat into our heads, the attention to detail.

MD: Yeah, it wasn't part of the strategy anymore. More strategy based on, dare I say, money? Money for the program? I don't know.

DO: Could be. Those things do make a difference, particularly in the recruiting world. It was less of an impact when I was being recruited. You wouldn't think about the facilities as much, because everybody's was the same. As time went on,

money was invested, newer facilities were done, and a kid might look at it and say, "man, this is really nice." That wasn't as big a factor, back in the day. Everybody had steel lockers; everybody had benches instead of nice chairs.

MD: Easy chairs, yeah. Those Phil Knight Taj Mahals like the Ducks have for the football team.

DO: Exactly.

MD: One of the legendary games – we've had legendary games throughout our history, but one that you were involved with that I am mesmerized by is a major upset of John Wooden's Bruins in February of '74. That's got to be one of the proudest memories of your basketball career. Bill Walton, who you ended up playing with, I found a quote from him in article from 2004, and he said, "when the infidels from the frontier stole our posterity and our place in history, and we have never recovered," and you were part of that.

DO: [laughs] Bill has a way with words.

MD: That's got to be one of your favorite memories.

DO: That was great. As you say, that's a memory for a lifetime. UCLA, as I said before, was just dominant, had a stranglehold on everything. They had a winning streak that, what was it, eight-nine or eighty-two games or something in a row, and then Notre Dame beat them just a few weeks before we beat them. We had a good team that year and, down at UCLA, the way the schedule worked, we played UCLA at UCLA the week before they came up here, and we only lost by five or six points. But it was a close enough game and we played with them well enough, we go, "we can beat these guys."

And I think Ralph wanted to beat John Wooden badly. John Wooden got so much recognition, so much attention, with what they were able to accomplish at UCLA. But prior to coming to Oregon State, Ralph Miller's teams had beaten UCLA every time. He had a 4-0 record from his time at Wichita State and Iowa. So I think, back in the back of his mind, I think Ralph took pride in being able to beat UCLA. I think that was a big challenge, because he thought, "really, why shouldn't I be mentioned in the same breath?"

[0:15:17]

I don't want to put words in Ralph's mind, but he took great pride in making it such that we could beat UCLA's press. UCLA was known for their 2-2-1 zone press that would turn people over a few times a game. But they made very, very few mistakes, so if you make a few mistakes, they never made mistakes, so it was very difficult for you to get your way back into a game. So Ralph always took pride in us being able to break the press, and not only not turn the ball over but score against their press. So aggressively attack that and use it against them. And so in the games, they stopped pressing us because we were successful against it.

We were successful because we pressed ourselves. So in practice, you're always working against something and Ralph, as you probably know, his statement was, "the pass is the chief weapon of attack." So we were drilled well in how to attack things, and the pass, and the ball being passed is much faster than trying to dribble through something. So long story short, we played well, made plays. George Tucker made four free throws at the end of the game that kind of sealed the victory, and it was a really big deal for us to beat their Pac-8 winning streak.

MD: Forty-nine games in the Pac-8, we stopped it.

DO: That's right, we stopped the streak. Now, the story doesn't end there. It doesn't end because, back in the day, you played Fridays and Saturdays. So we beat them on Friday night, they played Oregon on Saturday night and Oregon beat them on Saturday. So *Sports Illustrated*, of course, all the sudden came out – after we beat them, this was such a big deal, "we need to go cover the game and talk to people." So they're at The Pit when Oregon beats them, so all the pictures were of Oregon beating them. And the story went on and on, you know, it's the "Lost on the Oregon Trail," I think was the title of the *Sports Illustrated* article. It was like three or four pages. This was a big deal; UCLA never lost. So we got about that much [holds fingers a few inches apart] of the story out of three or four pages, which always sat pretty hard on us. That sat us on pretty hard.

MD: You beat the streak!

DO: We beat the streak, they got all the coverage. And what made it worse was Kenny Moore was the writer for *Sports Illustrated*; he wrote that article. And he was a track and field athlete at Oregon, really good track and field – I don't know if he made an Olympic team, but he was an NCAA champion or really, really good track and field athlete. And he wrote the article. So one of our football players in the letters to the editor of *Sports Illustrated*, he wrote, "I'm sure Kenny Moore was wearing his Oregon letter jacket at the time that he wrote the article." [laughs] So it was just classic. And then to follow on, one last thing, it's always haunted us that played in that game that it would come up. So, I was at a trade show many years later in Indianapolis, and after the trade show, a group of us decided we were going to go to a sports bar. And went into the sports bar, it was a crowded place, walked up to the bar and the cover of the *Sports Illustrated* of that lost weekend, from *Sports Illustrated*, was laminated into the top of the bar. We couldn't get away from it. So anyway, it goes on. That was a great memory.

0:19:50]

You asked about great memories, I remember the first time we played University of Iowa. This was in the Far West Classic, the tournament at Christmas-time every year. So Ralph came to Oregon State from Iowa, and so we went into the locker room before that game and Ralph walked in and he says, "gentlemen, you will not lose this game." And turned around and walked out. That was his pre-game speech. And we went out and he pressed the full time, full court press, ran the ball, only played seven or eight guys for the whole game. And I believe it was the worst loss in Iowa basketball history – I think we beat them by fifty-some points. So there must have been some bad blood when Ralph left Iowa. So I remember that. I remember great tournament games in the Far West Classic. That was just such a great tournament.

I remember – we played Oregon many times a year and one of the games that I remember is when we were beating Oregon and there was a trophy called the Chancellor's Trophy. And the Chancellor's Trophy was awarded to the team that won the series between Oregon and Oregon State. We always played a minimum of three times; sometimes we played four. So this one year, and I really can't remember whether it was '74 or '75, but we beat Oregon and won the Chancellor's Trophy. And so our cheerleader, a guy named Rick Coutin, took the Chancellor's Trophy and was holding it over his head and he was running around Gill Coliseum, because we were going to win that game. And he ran in front of the Oregon bench and Dick Harter stuck out his leg – Dick Harter, the coach of Oregon – stuck out his leg and tripped Rick Coutin. So of course he goes flying, crashes to the floor, the trophy hits the floor, rolls down across the floor, and the crowd at Gill just went crazy. They had to escort the Oregon team out and I was concerned for their lives. It was crazy. Shortly after that, they stopped the Chancellor's Trophy competition. I guess Oregon got tired of us winning it. [laughs] Those are certainly some great memories.

MD: And certainly during your time, you played against some guys that went on to stardom. Bill Walton comes to mind. You played against him consistently, because didn't you guys graduate the same year?

DO: Same year. I was redshirted, so he played four years and I played five years. So I played against Bill four different times. But he was by far the best player I ever played against. He didn't just push and shove and wasn't a bully, he played with finesse and quickness and timing. He was a great passer and I found it very hard to guard him. And part of it was Bill and part of it was his teammates and how they played, because if you tried to come around on one side or the other side or front him, somehow his body position, he would pin you, try to pin you, one way or the other. And they used those angles to get him the ball and he was a great shooter. Just a fabulous player.

I'll continue with a story from that UCLA game when we beat them. There's just a couple of seconds left in the game and Bill and I were standing at about half court in a dead ball situation. And he says, "Doug, I wanted to congratulate you for winning. I thought you played a really good game and you guys deserve to win." And I'm sitting here and I'm thinking, "here's a guy that had lost two games in his life – one was to Notre Dame and the second one was to us." And for him to be gracious enough to say that, that was incredible. But he was by far the best player I ever played against.

[0:24:55]

I played against Phil Chenier and Gus Williams. Gus Williams was at USC, just a tremendous guard – I remember a play where he beat one of our guards on the baseline. So I stepped over to try and help him and stop Gus Williams. And so I stepped over and he kind of took the ball to his side [motions hands to the left] and I started turning to go pick up the guy he was passing it to, and he had gone under my arms, spun the ball up off the backboard, and it went in. And I go, "man,

this guy's got a future." There were so many good players, so many good players. We played North Carolina State when they had David Thompson. And I don't know if you remember David, but he had a tremendous NBA career. He was one of those really, really high jumpers. I think he had a forty-six-inch jump reach. It just goes on and on and on. Tremendous players and great teams that we had a chance to play against.

MD: That's something that, especially you guys, playing so many games, the exposure to some of these big names is a lot greater than us just playing with the Pac-12, Pac-8.

DO: Well, the team that put us out of the tournament was Indiana. And Indiana was undefeated at that point, and they had steamrolled everybody. We ended up losing by ten or eleven, something like that, which was one of the closest games that they had all year. And I think it had a lot to do with Lonnie Shelton, who was the best player on our team, got in some foul trouble. So we took him out, or coach took him out, at the end of the first half. They went on a run and I think they led by twenty-one at halftime, and I think we cut it to ten or eleven in the second half. But again, they had several players that went on to play in the NBA. They were 30-0 at the time they beat us, they ended up getting beat the next night by Kentucky – who, Kentucky had three or four guys who went on to the NBA – in what I think was the best basketball game I've ever seen. So you get a chance to play at that kind of level, it's pretty special.

MD: And it was probably something kind of special to be able to watch these guys on t.v. in later years. I mean, did you watch Bill Walton when the Blazers won the championship. "Hey, I guarded this guy."

DO: Yeah. [laughs] "I couldn't stop him either." Yeah, it's pretty special.

MD: I was reading an article about the game and one of the things that they bring up in the article, which is kind of a history thing for me, is that the day of that game, the UCLA game, you had to get up especially early to go fill your girlfriend's tank, because it was at the height of the 1974 gas crisis.

DO: That's exactly right.

MD: So you're a part of this kind of history as well as national history, living with the gas crisis. And also you were living in the Campus Villa.

DO: That's right, Campus Villa apartments – still there.

MD: Yeah, they were on the way down at that time and I think they've redone them.

So are you still in contact with any of these people? Your teammates? Do you have any contact at all with Bill Walton; did you, in the later years?

DO: Yeah, we'd run into each other at times. The last time I saw him was at the Pac-12 tournament last year in Las Vegas, so we had a chance to talk for a while. He goes, "jeez Doug, every time I go to Portland I run into you people and I always get reminded." Anyway, we've had some good laughs over the year. Bill, as you know, was very fond of the Grateful Dead, so quickly the conversation shifts to how he's going to go to the next Grateful Dead concert.

MD: Yeah, he would ride in their bus.

DO: Yeah, he did that. But ever since he said that to me in the game, I've always had a tremendous amount of respect for him, because he didn't have to say that. He did not have to say that at all, but I thought that was gracious. So I've always been a Bill Walton fan as a commentator, even though some people can't take his style. But I think that bodes well.

[0:30:24]

And the oil crisis was a big deal back in the early '70s. Was your license plate and odd or an even? Even. So you had to get your gas when you can get your gas, and they would maybe only give you five gallons or something. So if you missed your time to get some gas, you may not drive. You were walking. And my girlfriend didn't want to walk, so there we go.

MD: And you were up at 4:30 in the morning, it said.

DO: 4:30. I should have done that more often; maybe we would have been NCAA champions.

MD: You were getting a good start on the day.

Well, I'd like to transition into your later career after graduation. Now, you graduated in '75 with a degree in Business.

DO: That's right.

MD: So when you walked in graduation and memories of that day and your actual finishing of the college career.

DO: Yeah, that was tremendous. Getting a degree was a big deal. In our family, it wasn't ever a question of whether you were going to get a degree, so for me, it wasn't like, "oh jeez, I'm the first one in my family to get a degree." Both of my parents went to college. My father was a teacher and, at the time, a professor in a junior college, so academics were always a big deal. But to be able to get a degree and walk, and to recognize that you've earned something that is pretty special, and you think back to how hard you have to work on certain things and do well. I was fortunate enough to graduate with honors, which I was always proud of. But just the walking experience is good, and I think that Oregon State does something that is really pretty special, and this tradition continues, because my son just graduated this last June, and they do that. But they give you your diploma and it's your diploma with the certificate in there, as you walk.

MD: Instead of a blank folder like pretty much everybody else.

DO: Pretty much everybody else does. But that was really, really cool. So that was a fun thing.

MD: Was your guys' ceremony in Gill?

DO: It was in Gill. And boy, it's grown a little bit since then.

MD: Yeah, they can't do it now. They do it in Reser.

So after graduation, you continued playing ball. Now you were playing basketball for a group called Athletes in Action, which was a Christian-based ministry and kind of a really interesting organization I read about. And during that, you ended up playing against other college teams like University of San Francisco, UNLV, and both of those teams, you guys beat and they were ranked top five. So what type of organization was this and how did you get involved?

DO: Yeah, Campus Crusade for Christ was the sponsoring organization and it was an organization that, I think, started in the '60s sometime. So it was a Christian ministry on college campuses, was their primary focus. But part of what they had was an athletic ministry. They were really strong with wrestling and basketball, were their two main ones. So we were staff members on Campus Crusade, but the team that was put together, the two years that I was there, there were some really, really good players. And the time was different. Now the NCAA won't allow exhibition games, but back then, there wasn't. And in the two years that I played with Athletes in Action, every one of those games was on the road except for two. We had two home games toward the end. We played the Russian national team in '77, I guess. We were playing at that kind of level.

[0:35:07]

And we won an AAU national championship. Again, it's a different animal – a different time and a different era – but the AAU, it was kind of a developmental league, so to speak, at that time. So they had a national championship and we won the national championship one year, and because of that, we got the opportunity to represent the United States in a couple of international tournaments. One of them was the Christopher Columbus Cup, which was in South America, and we played in Buenos Aires for that tournament. And then we also played, in 1976, in the pre-Olympic tournament. There's a qualifying tournament to play in the Olympics, so we played in Hamilton, Ontario. And there were something like six automatic berths to that: the previous champion, and Canada, and the U.S. champion, and the world champion, and some other were automatic qualifiers. But the rest of the people had to go through this pre-Olympic tournament in order to qualify. So we represented the United States in that pre-Olympic tournament, filled a spot, and gave some competition for that.

But in the two year, 97-15 was the record. So we had a really, really competitive team. And we played teams like North Carolina and Minnesota with Behagen and Turner and those guys that got in that big fight, Dave Winfield and those guys. But North Carolina; played LSU, played Purdue. It was a big time schedule. Great experience, really, really enjoyed it. Loved the guys that I was with and the ministry part of it was great as well. You mentioned playing USF – they were number one in the nation at the time and we beat them, so that was good. UNLV was number three in the nation at the time, we beat them. But UNLV, they were the Running Rebels, and I'll tell you a story – this was one of our fifteen losses. Back in the day, you couldn't dunk in warm-ups, so we were playing in Las Vegas and we come out and everything is lights, typical Las Vegas, going crazy. So one of their guys dunked in warm-ups, so we made the free throw for the technical. And the next thing we knew, we were behind 17-1. [laughs] It was like, they were the Running Rebels and they beat us pretty good. But that didn't happen very often.

MD: Now you also had a career in Europe, playing ball.

DO: That's right.

MD: So that was after being with Athletes in Action?

DO: Yeah, it was – well, during the summers at Oregon State, I played on teams that travelled around Europe. I went three different summers on that. Eleven weeks, one year; seven weeks another year; and six weeks another year. So I played in that kind of an environment, but that was a U.S. team made up of U.S. players, and we would play various different club teams all over the place. Great experience. Ralph was always very good about letting me go to that, but he always tried to get me to work really hard during the off-season to gain weight, but then I'd go over there and I'd lose it all. But I got great playing experience.

And then I started working with a company called Universal Gym Equipment. And as part of my career, I went to the headquarters, which was in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. And in 1982, they needed somebody to set up a sales and distribution network in England and Europe. And to get work permits to do a job like that, you really could only get a visa for three months, because they wouldn't give a visa for a job that any of their people could do and what I was going to do there, anybody could have done. But not everybody could play basketball. So I got my work permits through playing basketball. So I played with a team in Colchester, England that was sponsored by British Telecom. So I got my work permit to play basketball with them and then did all the other work that I needed to do the rest of the time. It almost killed me. It was very difficult to do that. But again, a great experience.

[0:40:41]

MD: Was that all over Europe or just in England?

DO: The playing was all in England. The work that I did, there were times that I went to the continent and did some things, but it was hard – like I say, it about killed me. But it was a great experience. It was interesting how basketball has changed, because European basketball in the early '80s was a lot different than it is now. The team that I joined had won two games the previous year, but they had averaged over a hundred points a game. So they scored but they didn't play any defense. That's not how Ralph taught us to play and that's not how Athletes in Action in was. You know you've got to play defense if you're going to win consistently.

The other American on the team was from Stanford, so I had known him from playing against Stanford. And then the coach was from Indiana, so he had been under Bobby Knight. So if you're going to play with Bobby Knight, you're going to play defense. I remember going to the coach of the team – after two or three games in the season, the owner of the team called me in and he says, "you know Doug, we've lost a game and we're only averaging eighty-one points a game, and you're averaging twenty-seven points a game, and Cliff is averaging about twenty-three. We've lost a game and we aren't scoring enough points." Well, we had to have that conversation and by the end of the year we ended up 22-5 and finished second in the league. So we taught them how to play and it was a different mindset. But a great experience.

MD: And now the European league, there are people going back and forth between the NBA, plus the Olympics and the national teams. It's a different animal.

DO: It's a different animal. But it was a different time. I remember playing in Yugoslavia – now Yugoslavia doesn't exist anymore – but in Yugoslavia, one of the things that was very interesting was how they play pick-up games. So like you're going to play three-on-three, half court or something, we would play that the ball goes up, the defense gets the rebound, you clear the ball out in front and you start attacking the hoop again. They didn't. The way they played the game was, if the defender got the rebound, they could put the ball back up and you didn't have to clear it. So the board play was unbelievably physical. The game was just way, way more physical up front than what we would have been used to here, but that was European basketball back in the day. And the way they ran their fast break – I remember one game, they saw John Wooden's team shoot using the backboard, because John Wooden believed in bank shots. So these people bank shot everything, free throws, everything. So that would mess you up. I mean, I've gotten off track, but it's interesting to see how the game has changed and now it's become much more American. You really wouldn't know the difference other than a few rule changes.

MD: So your career with Universal Gym Equipment, basically you were upper management?

[0:44:59]

DO: Yeah, always in sales and marketing, I guess. I started in customer service and then worked my way up into a sales position from regional sales rep to, I was director of sales and marketing for Fitnet and for the institutional line of equipment that they sold. So I spent three years back in Iowa, which is where they were headquartered. And then my wife and I decided that all of our family was West Coast, so we chose to move back to the Northwest and started – I was regional manager for a few years and then I took a job with BikeE Corporation, which is here in Corvallis.

MD: Oh, it is in Corvallis. And they sell semi-recumbent bicycles. What year was that? Was that early in the development of those?

DO: '96 was when I started. And they had Dave Ullman, who is a mechanical engineering professor here, he and another guy developed the bike. It had a unique design in that it utilized an aluminum beam that the seat could slide back and forth on the beam. So you and I could ride the same bike by just sliding the seat to different positions. So it was really, really a cool design. And we had seen in Universal Gym Equipment that recumbent bicycles in health clubs, that was what everybody was choosing to ride. They weren't riding the upright bikes as much, for stationary bikes. So they had asked me to be a consultant to put together some information and I fell in love with the product. So I decided that I didn't want to travel as much as I was travelling anymore, and the headquarters was here and I love Corvallis, so it was a good opportunity to make a change with more of a start-up company and see if we could grow it into something. So I loved every minute of that; great experience.

MD: You came home.

DO: Yeah, came home.

MD: Well again, you also came home to your alma mater in 2002 and began a career here with OSU Athletics. What brought you back to Gill?

DO: Well, I came back to work with the Foundation. So as a Foundation employee, I'm raising money, but my area of focus was athletics. So what brought me up was an opportunity to stay in Corvallis and I feel that one of the best decisions that I ever made in my life was to come to school at Oregon State. And there's a huge trickle effect of decisions that you make in life, and one of those things that has created a tremendous trickle is my association with Oregon State. So to be able to give back to the school, for the opportunities that I was given, made it really a special thing for me. And to be able to talk as a student athlete knowing how that affected my life, and to talk to people that may want to donate money so that other people could have a similar experience, that was really compelling to me. And it's been great. A little over thirteen years at this point, and we've seen so many changes in that thirteen years. Unbelievable.

MD: What part did you play in the capital campaign which raised a little bit more than a billion dollars?

DO: All of it.

MD: You were right in the middle of it.

DO: The campaign started in 2005, I guess. But really the first thing that I would have been involved in a big level would have been the Raising Reser project, when we made the new side of Reser Stadium. I think I started in September of 2002 and we started holding information meetings starting the end of November 2002. So, shortly after I started. And shoot, we went all over the place talking to people about what this expanded stadium, what it would be like, how it would impact them, encouraging them to get involved with season tickets, because it's those donations that go along with the season tickets that will help fund it. And so that started and, boy, we gave them all over the state, and gave people the opportunity to ask questions and talk about what they were doing. And the stadium was finished in 2005, our first game was against Portland State. I don't know if it was the end of August or the first part of September, but that first game was against Portland State in 2005. So all of the build up to that was right as I was getting started. And since then, look at the changes in facilities, it's unbelievable.

[0:50:55]

MD: Yeah, we're state of the art.

DO: State of the art. People that say that Oregon State doesn't have good facilities haven't been here for twenty years. I'm really thankful for Gary Andersen and Wayne Tinkle and what they've said since they've come here. They've recognized really what we do have at Oregon State and it's really good. It's really, really good. There's still things that we need to tweak and improve and continue to get better, but we're ticking off all of those things.

MD: And then the programs that are attached to those benefit and build.

DO: That's right. Well, we talked a little bit earlier, you asked me about what is different and what my experience was and then later on, when the teams weren't as good. One of the projects that we've done is the basketball practice facility and that was completed a couple years ago. Well, look at the changes in the last couple of years in both the men's and the women's basketball. The basketball practice facility has something to do with that. It does because recruiting – it's a huge recruiting tool, and it helped us get Scott Rueck, it helped us get Wayne Tinkle, it helped us have one of the better recruiting classes in the country for both men and women over the last couple of years.

And it allowed us to be more effective across the board, because Gill Coliseum was being used for everything. So back in the day, whenever Ralph wanted to practice, that's when you would practice, because there was basically no women's basketball program, not like there is now. There wasn't a volleyball program like there is now, so we never had to compete for any of the time. Well, up until we had the basketball practice facility built, you had men's basketball practice, women's basketball practice, volleyball practice, that were all in season, all practicing, all having to squeeze in time at the same time. Then you throw in gymnastics meets, wrestling meets. I've talked to Michael and Tanya Chaplin where they would have to set up for a meet in one hour, from when a basketball team would have a shoot around and then they would have to get everything ready and set up for gymnastics.

MD: And then tearing down right as they leave for wrestling.

DO: That's right. So the basketball practice facility made a huge functional difference. And the weight room that we have; you won't find a better weight room, it's phenomenal. It's really, really good. So that's helpful. Our academic center, the Beth Ray Center, was another project that we were actively involved in raising money for. And you won't find a better – the east side of Reser Stadium is as nice as you're going to find anyplace, it's really, really nice. Now we're currently renovating the Valley Football Center and raising money for that. And the indoor Truax Center, that happened before I started but that was a game changer. I think – personal opinion – I think the indoor football facility, the Truax Center, had as much to do with us winning the national titles in baseball as any other thing. Because, well, all the sudden you've now got an indoor facility where these guys can practice effectively during the winter, and the rain becomes less of a factor.

[0:55:12]

MD: In baseball, that's everything.

DO: That's everything. And Pat and his staff obviously do a fabulous job and they've done that. But facilities matter. And Gill Coliseum, I remember distinctly somebody who made a donation to help us renovate the training facilities, the medical training room facilities. He toured the training facilities before we upgraded it and he said, "that's the same

whirlpool that I used when I was here thirty-five years ago." We've had to make changes. Had to make changes. And so he went on to make a nice donation to that facility, but there's a lot of money that's been spent that nobody has ever seen. The basement of Gill, the number of locker rooms, the number of teams that we have now is so much greater than when I was here. There's seventeen teams now where, back in the day, there were what? Maybe six? Something like that. Plus, the media now and the t.v. and having everything set up so that they can come and just plug in. Or access for their computers so that they can write their stories and submit it. All that stuff has been upgraded to where it's as good as you're going to find. So a lot of positive and I feel really, really proud to have been a part of that. It'll be fun someday to walk around and say, "yeah, I helped with that. I helped with that," and giving other student athletes the opportunity.

I'm going to share one other story, because this relates to the student athlete. Coming out of high school, I don't think people really necessarily recognize where their scholarships come from. I think that's true probably across campus, but I know it's true in athletics as well. The perspective is, you're given a scholarship, they want you to come, you're going to be involved in school and you just think, "ok, the school is covering my expenses." There's not necessarily a connection that somebody has donated some money to give you the opportunity. And I remember talking – this would have been during the Raising Reser project and we had a defensive back named Brandon Hughes. And Brandon Hughes was from Chicago and he was in a Business class up on campus. And so their group decided they were going to do a project on Reser Stadium and so that what was they were going to work on and do their report. So Brandon's part of that was to come and find out how it's financed; how are we going to pay for this? So I was one of the people he interviewed as he was going through his classwork.

So I had just really a great opportunity to talk with him about how this happens. And so, "Brandon, do you have any idea where your scholarship comes from?"

"No."

"Do you have any idea how it works?" So I said, "the next time you go down on the field before the game, I want you to stop and I want you to look up in the stands and I want you to look all the way around you. Because everybody that is in there in the stands has made some kind of a donation to give you an opportunity to play football but, more importantly, get an education, get a degree and prepare yourself for the rest of your life." And I'll never forget, first of all, the look on his face. And he says, "you mean, people would do that for me?" And coming from him, it makes sense. He was an inner-city kid from Chicago, there's not a background or a history of philanthropy. His particular family, I think he might have been the first one ever to go to school, first one ever to graduate, first one ever to go to college. And all the sudden it was like, "somebody's going to give me that opportunity?" And it hit him that, "I need to be a little more serious about making sure that I take advantage of my opportunity." I'll never forget that.

[1:00:24]

But to be able to share that, because I was Brandon Hughes. I was Brandon Hughes. What do I know as an eighteen-year old kid? I'm going to come here to study Pharmacy and play basketball. That's what it is. I had no idea where it came from or how or why. And who are the people that are helping me? And it means that I need to give back when my time comes, and that's a powerful message. And so I think we have a coaching staff and people who work in athletics today that really are doing a much better job of letting these kids know where that happens. And I think those of us that work in the Foundation are obviously a part of that, but it's vitally important that these kids understand that. Anybody who gets assistance across campus needs to know where that assistance comes from, because otherwise, how would you know? "Oh, the school's just helping me. I deserve it. I got a 3.9 or I got a 4.0 in high school, I deserve it." Well, somebody had to give it to you.

MD: Yeah, because it just doesn't come out of space.

DO: It just doesn't come out of space. So that was a side benefit that was really neat about the project, that Reser project.

MD: Well, there's another project that you've involved with that's been kind of near and dear to you, it sounds like. Beginning in 2008, bringing track back to Oregon State after an absence of, what, thirty years or something like that?

DO: Well, it was ended in 1988. So it was brought back – actually, in 2004 the decision was made to go ahead and bring track and field back. And where it came from is the NCAA said, "if you're going to compete at the D1 level, the highest level, you have to have a minimum of sixteen teams." And at the time we only had fifteen. So Bobby D. had to pull together a group of people, "ok, what are we going to do?" So as they're thinking about it, you say "why track and field?" Because, to a certain extent, it would have been very simple to say, "let's add women's tennis," because with Title IX, gender equity and women's scholarships and stuff, we needed to add a women's sport to that equation. So it would have been relatively inexpensive and easier to say, "we're just going to add a tennis team." We already had some indoor courts and not a huge expense and you get a team. But Bobby D., after talking to some other people – Bob De Carolis. We know him as Bobby D. He said that really track and field makes a lot of sense. Number one, there's a huge heritage of track and field at Oregon State.

MD: A hundred years or more.

DO: Yeah. In the '60s and '70s, we beat Oregon quite often; probably as much as they beat us. So it was a really good track and field heritage, and through the '60s and early '70s, we had a lot of people that were in the top ten nationally. People that did well, qualified for Olympics across the board. So there's a strong heritage of track and field at Oregon State, there's strong heritage of track and field across the state of Oregon. It's the largest participation sport in Oregon, in high school. So then, there's a unique thing about track and field, and that is that you could get, say, ten athletes in cross country. So there's cross country is a sport, indoor track is a sport, outdoor track and field is a sport. So those same ten athletes could compete in cross country, indoor track, outdoor track. You haven't increased your costs, but you've increased your Title IX count and you've increased the number of teams that you participate in. So you're leveraging whatever costs were there.

[1:05:22]

So the decision was made to start with the women's team and then build it to the point where we could bring a men's team back. And it was quite a process. We started the fundraising for it, really from the background of, people were really upset that the program had been dropped. So some of the people were – I remember when Coach Sullivan and I had our first little fundraising event, there were people that came up to me and said, "I'm never going to give you a penny. I'm so upset that this program was dropped, the university shouldn't have done it, we were successful, it gave a lot of people opportunities to go to school. And I'm just really bitter." But again, there were other people like Jerry Church – Jerry and Sharon Church – he was a 1954, I believe, All American. He was an All American javelin thrower for Oregon State for two years. And he and his wife were the first ones to step up and make a large give to start the fundraising project. And he got up at one of the meetings and he says, "you know, I was like a lot of you guys here. I was angry, I was bitter, I was hurt. They took our sport away and didn't give other kids from small towns the opportunity to come and go to school." But he says, "I realized it was time for me to get over it. I recognized that I was in a position to give somebody else the opportunity." So he got up and talked and said that, and that was kind of the start.

But we had, Kelly and I – Kelly Sullivan, the track coach, and I, and a guy named Doug Crooks, who was a runner in the early '70s. He was actually the sports editor of *The Barometer* for a while. But he started writing stories, success stories, of people that donated and why they donated. And we worked for probably two years to try and get up and over the hump. And we had a couple of people that kind of stepped up, the Whyte family, Jim and Luana Whyte. He was a track athlete in '68 and a '72 grad from here. They made a large contribution that allowed us to build the track, and we've gradually been building. We're about ready to start construction of grandstands and a scoreboard and everything that will make the facility complete, and then we'll start the process of bringing men's track and field back.

So it's taken a long time, but there's been about 350 people that have donated to this cause to make it happen. And it's a wide spectrum of people; not just track and field alums, but people that care about Oregon State. It's been really fantastic to be involved. I've always been a bit of a track junkie, not that I was ever any good at track; although for a seven-foot, 230-pound guy, I ran less than a five-minute mile, so I guess that's not too bad. But my roommates were track junkies.

MD: Your position with OSU Athletics and the Foundation has made a major difference in the facilities we have, the programs we have, as well as for the university as a whole. What are your personal feelings about these accomplishments? How does it feel to have a part of this?

DO: It feels tremendous; it's a real sense of pride to be able to walk around and know that you had a hand or you were involved in some of these beautiful facilities that we have now. You just go down the list from softball to the track to what's happened at baseball. The wrestling facility, the basketball facility, the academic center, you just go down the line. And what makes it really rewarding is you know what it was like before, both as a student athlete but also being a fan, coming to games, and then being able to be part of, and a driver of, making things way, way better. And so you know that that helps the university as a whole and you know that it helps the student athletes that are going to be here for the next fifty years. Because we didn't build things poorly, we built them well. They're here to last, they're here to stay, and people can be proud of them for a long time.

[1:10:52]

MD: Well that begs a question, where are we going from here? What are our goals as far as what we've got now and what's the next best thing for OSU and the athletic program?

DO: Well, from a facilities standpoint?

MD: Or the program.

DO: I think it's going to be to continue to improve facilities, but I also think that it's – we're starting a program now called the Everyday Champions program. So if you think about it, it's the other side of athletics. So at the end of the day, all of these people come to Oregon State, they have a skill that's allowed them to come participate in something that they enjoy, they're given the opportunity to get a degree. But every one of those people is going to leave Oregon State and the goal is to have everyone graduate and Oregon State should be proud because the athletes do graduate at a pretty high level over time. But they're going to move on to the rest of their lives. So we have this program called the Everyday Champions, where you're a champion every day in what you do, what you say, how you act, your leadership, your schoolwork, the way you interact with people. And as you move on with your life, being an everyday champion as a father or a wife. Being an everyday champion in where you're working. So this concept of beyond football, beyond basketball, beyond gymnastics, and developing the full person.

One of the beautiful things about athletics is that there are winners and there are losers. You keep score. And in not a lot of things in life do you keep score, or where winning matters. Winning matters in sports and winning matters in real life, if you think about it, in a lot of different things. So if we can help people to develop not only the athletics skills to be successful for a couple years while they're here, but can develop the skills that they need for the rest of their lives, that's vitally important. So that's an area that I think has started, we're going to continue to grow it, we're seeking support for those types of programs now. But that's way bigger than what happens on the football field or basketball court.

There will be facility projects that we'll continue to tweak. I mentioned finishing the track. The gymnastics facility, which is in the old Mitchell Playhouse, that facility is starting to get a little long in the tooth. And our gymnastics program has been fantastic on a national level for a long period of time. But it's almost like that person who walked through the old training room and said, "that's the same whirlpool that I was in thirty years ago," that's kind of where we are with the gymnastics facility.

We'll finish the renovation of the football facility. We'll put some lights at the softball fields. On the west side, the old side, of Reser Stadium, we'll continue to upgrade that west side of the stadium. That'll be a few years down the road, but that'll happen. So we'll gradually tick off some of these other things that we need to do. It never ends. When you think about it, we've come a long way, but we've got a long way to go. And that Everyday Champions program, that's never going to end. That's life.

[1:15:22]

MD: Well, your involvement with OSU spans a student career as well as all of the work that you've done with athletics. But one of the things that we always like to do with our alumni in these interviews is we want to catch up with our folks and find out about family. Kids and your wife, what does she do? Let's fill this part of your life in.

DO: OK. I've been married for thirty-two years, and my wife Kim, she was in the health field and I met her through the health field days. And then she was a pre-school teacher, once we moved to Corvallis in '96, and she recently retired.

And then we have one son and he just finished with an Engineering degree here from Oregon State, finished up in June. And he's now living in Portland working for Anderson Construction. And we can speak really highly for the Engineering school here. They did a really good job of preparing him – Reed is his name – and he said that he started his job and he feels like he was prepared well for what he needs to do. He feels like the Engineering program did a good job of setting up internships, of setting of job interviews for the kids. So if the kids do what they need to do, I think everybody in his class got a job, except for one that chose to go to graduate school. So that's our family. It's not a big family, but it's been good.

MD: No grandkids yet, but you'll be a grandpa.

DO: Not yet. My son has just got engaged, so those kids will be next.

MD: So aside from being devoted to OSU, what do you do for enjoyment? What are some of your special interests and hobbies?

DO: Well, we're involved in our church. We're involved in Rotary; I've gotten involved in Rotary, and one of their sayings is "service above self," and I've really adopted that as something that I think is real important. So I've gotten involved in Rotary activities. I like to do exercise activities, that's real important. As the body holds up and allows you to do it, I like to ride bikes and be out of doors and hike and play some golf. Not very well, but I enjoy the people I'm with and love being out on golf courses. I really like doing that. My wife and I like to go to plays and music as spectators, that's kind of like what we like to do a lot. My wife is not as big an athletic spectator. She was a soccer player and if she could play football, she'd be all over it. She loves to participate, but not a great spectator. So most of our spectator activities would be plays and music and those kinds of things. We like to travel, like to experience different things. We've never been huge gift people, but we've always decided that we'll give experiences. So those are the kinds of things that we do and like to do.

MD: So you're here in Corvallis close to campus?

DO: Yeah, we live on the north side of town. Dixon Creek comes out of the hills out on the north side of town, so our place backs up to the green space at Dixon Creek. We love living in Corvallis. I remember when we moved here, it was so nice moving from Portland where it took you forty-five minutes to get anywhere. Our son was five-years old and it took us ten minutes to get from our house to Papa's Pizza and we stopped to pick up one of his friends along the way, and I go, "this is a really good place."

[1:19:55]

MD: Well, yours story has been a joy to capture. One of the things that we always really like to do is have our alumni – are there any words of wisdom that you would like to share with the Beaver Nation? Because this is going to be archived and part of the permanent record.

DO: Holy cow.

MD: Words of wisdom.

DO: Oh my gosh. My son and wife would say, "Doug, you've never said anything worth storing forever." But no, I guess if I were to say something to Beaver Nation, and maybe this sounds sappy or something, but embrace the goodness of Oregon State. It's a unique place. One of the things that has been enjoyable about working in athletics is that you get the opportunity to meet coaches that have been all over the place. It's kind of a nomadic existence for a lot of these coaches. You're going to get fired at some point, so you're moving around and hired and fired. But seeing those people that come from other places and seeing how they get to the point where they say, "this is really a unique place." I've seen that first-hand in how people view it. I've seen it from the standpoint of our son going to school at Oregon State, and seeing about the rich experience that he had living in a college town like Oregon State with teachers that cared. Just an aside or a flip off of that – we do exit interviews with student athletes and they'll say, "you know, it seemed like people cared." And that's something that's pretty special.

So embrace it for what it is and accept it as a really, really good, special place. We've seen parents of our son's age friends, where the kids went away to other schools and didn't have the same kind of experience. Or end up not with a good

direction. And that hasn't been our experience. Like I said earlier, I feel like one of the best decisions I've ever made was to go to school at Oregon State and I'm really happy and proud to still be working here, because Oregon State is a great place. So appreciate it and enjoy it and give other people the opportunities.

MD: Well Doug, on behalf of the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project, we want to thank you for your story and your participation. You've been great.

DO: Well Mike, thank you. I really appreciate it.

[1:23:24]