

**THE EVOLING MEDIA COVERAGE OF OREGON
FOOTBALL: HOW CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY,
ACCESS, AND THE TREND OF “IN-HOUSE” MEDIA,
HAVE IMPACTED TRADITIONAL JOURNALISTS**

by

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A THESIS

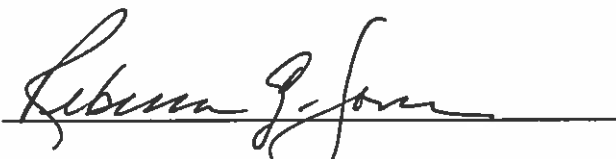
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Media coverage of Oregon football has changed over the years. Whether it's because of the technology used, with the emergence of the Internet and social media; the decrease in access that local media is given, with the Oregon athletic department closing practices; or the athletic department creating its own internal media, like GoDucks.com -- the landscape is evolving. This thesis examines the evolution of media coverage of Oregon football over the last three decades. My research has focused on three factors affecting the way journalist's coverage has evolved until today: Changes in technology, changes in access, and the trend of “in-house” media. My goal with this project was to examine how each of these evolutions in media coverage has affected “traditional” media in how they provide coverage, how they have been forced to adapt to date, and what the future may hold for sports coverage. The majority of the research for this project stems from personal interviews with past and present journalists, who have covered Oregon football for a variety of news outlets and mediums, as well as members of the University of Oregon's athletic department. The project also draws from interviews with academics, who have studied media, and people familiar with

NFL media access policies. My research also relied on media access data gathered from sports information directors around the Pac-12, including a comparison of credentialed media outlets from 20 years apart. I also looked at archived coverage, articles, and editorials from local news outlets, Nielsen TV ratings, and web traffic figures supplied by the Oregon athletic department.

My research revealed many changes in the way Oregon football has been covered and ways traditional media have had to adapt their coverage. By and large, my research seems to indicate that the role of local media has changed significantly, decreased considerably, and trends in local media coverage suggest an uncertain future for traditional media outlets. However, what is certain, is that there will always be a place for objective media coverage and “a need for someone to tell the truth as best they can.”¹

¹ Goe, Ken. Telephone interview. 15 Oct. 2014

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Introduction/Background

In 1991, University of Oregon football practices were completely open to the media.² At the time, only a handful of traditional, local media representatives covered the Ducks on a daily basis.³ Media were welcome to attend all practices, and were allowed to film virtually anything they wanted.⁴ Players and coaches were easily accessible during and after practice for interviews, and player injuries were disclosed openly to the public.⁵ The Ducks went 3-8 that season, finishing tied for last in the Pac-10.⁶ This was before “The Pick,” before the 100 straight home game sellouts, before GoDucks.com, before the flashy uniforms, before Chip Kelly, before the four straight BCS Bowl appearances, before Marcus Mariota, and most importantly, it was before the arrival of the Internet, which affected sports coverage and media access dramatically.

Media access to the Ducks decreased gradually throughout the next decade. Practices remained open most of the week, but local television stations were told they could only film specific drills during practice.⁷ In 1997, Wednesday practices were closed off completely to the media by the athletic department.⁸ These changes in access coincided with the on-field success of Oregon’s football program. The Ducks had improved their record each season starting in 1997, leading to an 11-win season and a #2 overall ranking in the final Associated Press poll of 2001.⁹ As the program continued to gain national popularity, access became even more limited for media. One

² Williford, Dave. Telephone interview. 8 Oct. 2014

³ Ibid

⁴ McKim, Todd. Telephone interview. 8 Oct. 2014

⁵ McGillvray, Pat. Telephone interview. 8 Oct. 2014

⁶ sports-reference.com

⁷ McKim

⁸ Williford

⁹ sports-reference.com

contributing factor for the limited access was the emergence of the Internet, which dramatically changed the way news was being consumed and sports was being covered. With the rapid rise in bloggers, social media use, and the sheer number of media members covering the Ducks, coaches became more careful of the information they made public.

Around this same time, a national trend of athletic departments creating their own “in house” media was sweeping the nation. Frustrated by what they perceived as external media’s “aggressive” and “antagonistic”¹⁰ tone in coverage on more controversial stories, and in an attempt to influence a message to their fans that would promote the program and maintain its positive image, the Oregon athletic department started GoDucks.com in 1998.¹¹ The website has become a major source for Oregon football information, statistics, practice reports, and game stories. In 2012, the Oregon athletic department hired Rob Mosley, formerly the football beat writer for the *Register Guard* newspaper, to be the Editor-in-Chief of GoDucks.com. Mosley lost his designation as a traditional journalist, but gained access to Oregon football practices, which no traditional media are allowed.

Media access changed dramatically when Chip Kelly became the Oregon head football coach in 2009. In the spring of 2010, journalists were told that if they wanted to interview players, they would need to request them through the athletic department at least 24 hours in advance. Later that year, practices became completely closed to the media and fans.¹² At the time, Kelly said it was to eliminate distractions, and that the

¹⁰ Mosley, Rob. Telephone interview. 7 Oct. 2014

¹¹ Therrell, Ryan. Telephone interview. 16 Oct. 2014

¹² Williford

players preferred it that way.¹³ Current Oregon head coach, Mark Helfrich, who retained all of Kelly's media access policies when he took over in 2013, has said that keeping practices closed prevents rumors from being spread and allows for a greater sense of "togetherness."¹⁴ Some members of the media were also frustrated when the athletic department ceased to disclose player injuries to the public.

While Kelly may not have been particularly popular with most of the local media because of the limits on access he implemented during his time at Oregon, the Ducks' popularity continued to grow on a national level, and the appetite for Oregon football content was higher than ever. During Kelly's tenure, the Ducks experienced the most on-field success in the program's history, going to four straight Bowl Championship Series games from 2010-2013.¹⁵

In 2012, more changes took place from a television standpoint, when the new Pac-12 Network acquired the TV rights to all local audio, video and website coverage available, which put them in complete control of much of the content, and left local TV stations unsure of their role in coverage. The decrease in access has frustrated many journalists, especially those who have worked in the business long enough to have witnessed the changes, and who can remember a time before media access was limited.

Some members were also rubbed the wrong way when in the summer of 2013, Oregon gave national media giants *Sports Illustrated* and the *New York Times* first access inside the new Hatfield-Dowlin complex, before finally opening it to local

¹³ Ward, Tom. Telephone interview. 9 Oct. 2014

¹⁴ Pintens, Craig. Personal interview. 7 Apr. 2015

¹⁵ goducks.com

reporters.¹⁶ In the past, the Oregon football program may have needed local sports coverage to promote the Ducks, help raise attendance, and inform fans, but that is no longer the case, as the program's national popularity continues to soar.

¹⁶ Bellamy, Ron. Telephone interview. 8 Oct. 2014

Changes in Technology

The most significant change in technology affecting sports coverage has been the explosion of the Internet and the World Wide Web. The Internet grew at a fast pace in the 1990s, as it evolved from an academic toy to a viable resource for information for the general population. With the emergence of the World Wide Web, the Internet started being used for more than just E-mail. Search engines changed the way people navigated the web, and more and more people started turning to it for the information they once sought in the newspaper. Everything from hard news to celebrity gossip, from political commentary to sports, quickly made its way from the printed page to the computer screen. This forced newspapers to start publishing online, as they evolved into a more web-oriented product. Social media websites, like Twitter -- which gave people the ability to share and exchange ideas, information, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks in 140 characters or less -- allowed journalists to directly engage readers, and gave them a better idea of what people wanted to read.¹⁷

While the growth of the Internet and social media changed the way reporters and publishers supplied information to fans, this rapid system of spreading information has also had a significant effect on the way athletic departments shared information with journalists. Football Communications Director Dave Williford, who has worked in the Oregon athletic department since 1985, said that the Internet not only changed the way information was being spread, but also caused athletic programs to tighten media

¹⁷ Mosley

access.¹⁸ Williford said that in part, it's about being in control of their own message, but it also comes from coaches trying to avoid a competitive disadvantage.

“It went from a handful of traditional media to the point where fans are Tweeting things, which makes it difficult to know where the information is coming from, that all of a sudden became public, and that contributed to coaches pulling back and closing practices to the media,” Williford said.

As the audience grew, the number of media outlets providing coverage of Oregon football, also expanded. Websites like E-Duck and Ducks Sports Authority, as well as personal Oregon football blogs, started competing with the local, traditional media to provide coverage. With the increase in the number of people publishing Oregon football-related content and the rapid spread of information over the Internet, athletic departments realized they were losing control over the message that was reaching the public. The unregulated flow led to stray rumors, unfounded information, and the divulging of team secrets to competitors.¹⁹

Oregon football coaches found this out the hard way, as opposing teams were able to take advantage of practice footage or injury reports that members of the media had made public, and use it for a competitive advantage over the Ducks. In 1997, after a game against Fresno State, Fresno offensive coordinator, and former Oregon coordinator, Jeff Tedford told then Oregon head football coach Mike Bellotti that they had obtained information on Oregon's plays and schemes from video tape that they had received from a spring scrimmage that had been filmed by Fox Sports Northwest, a

¹⁸ Williford

¹⁹ Giansante, Joe. Telephone interview. 13 Oct. 2014.

regional cable sports network.²⁰ And in a 2000 game against Wisconsin, which the Ducks lost, a member of the media posted on the Internet, Oregon's depth chart, a listing of the active starting and secondary players, which also detailed injuries to key players.²¹ Former Wisconsin head coach Barry Alvarez admitted he changed his team's game plan based on the depth chart. It was instances such as those that led to the athletic department's mistrust of the media and the imposition of stricter media access policies.

The rise of the Internet and the decrease in media access to college football programs across the country have gone hand in hand. In a 2012 *Seattle Times* article regarding the trend of decreasing media access to Pac-12 football practices, Columnist, Bud Withers wrote, "No factor has impacted the trend like the Internet, with its numerous fan websites and message boards. On occasion, a video or piece of intelligence that a coach finds intrusive shows up, and rather than ban the offender from practice, they're more apt to make a pre-emptive strike and restrict all media."²²

The transformations in technology were not just a hardship for the football team -- they also made it more difficult for reporters covering the team. The advances in technology coincided with the Ducks' increasing on-field success and national prominence and popularity as a program. An increased appetite for Oregon football-related content, and the growing demand for coverage, made the jobs of journalists more difficult.

²⁰ McKim

²¹ Giansante

²² Withers, Bud. "Media Access to Pac-12 Football Practices Is Shrinking." *The Seattle Times* 17 Sept. 2012: Print.

Ken Goe, who covered Duck football sporadically as a beat writer for *The Oregonian* for more than thirty years, remembered the evolution from newspaper, to print product with a digital presence, to an emphasis on digital content. He said that the disadvantage of the recent emphasis on digital content is that it doesn't allow as much time for in-depth profile stories.

"I think it makes it more difficult for the beat writers to do extended stories because the digital demands are so great," Goe said.²³

Instead of writing a single version of a story for the newspaper, today's reporters may write one version for the paper and then rewrite and update that story in additional online stories posted to the web throughout the day.²⁴

"We have two full-time beat writers, and they're posting four or five stories a day, and there's an appetite for that in this state, but it puts a real cramp on their time to be able to devote a day or two to doing an in-depth profile of somebody," he said.²⁵

In the face of competition with websites, blogs, and "In-house" media, many newspapers have found themselves faced with the decision to adapt to the times or close down. The diminished role of print journalism over the last decade has been evident and Goe said that it's "half exciting and half scary" to be in the newspaper business with the uncertainties that surround the future of journalism.

"For my first 25-30 years, we had it figured out. We put out a paper, and we did a pretty good job of it," he said. "But now, that's all different, and nobody knows what's going to happen and what's ultimately going to be the shape of journalism."²⁶

²³ Goe

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ ibid

Ron Bellamy, who covered Oregon football for the *Register Guard* from 1987-2011, recalled how the emergence of social media websites, like Twitter, and the emphasis on instantaneous stories written in 140 characters or less, affected the way he provided coverage.

“In 1987, you were thinking about what the readers would get the next day. And now, it seems to be about what your followers will get now,” Bellamy said. “In the old days, you would go into the locker room and get a quote and you would think ‘Great quote. This will play really well in my story.’ And now, five other people have it, and they’ve all tweeted it before you can even reach for your phone.”²⁷

KVAL-TV Sports Director, Tom Ward, who has covered the Ducks for the local CBS affiliate since 1993, points to 1996 as the first time he remembered the Ducks promoting their web presence

“They came out with their schedule for the 1996 season, and their schedule poster said something like, ‘Visit the world’s coolest web site,’ with ‘web’ being a play on words for webbed feet, and at the bottom, it had the web address of those days,” he said.²⁸

When Ward started at KVAL, the media outlets covering the Ducks on a daily basis consisted of a handful of local TV stations and daily newspapers. The size of the media pool has changed dramatically since then.

The change in size became evident when comparing the coverage between a significant turning point in Oregon football history, in 1994, and a 20-year

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ Bellamy

²⁸ Ward

commemoration in 2014.

In October of 2014, the Ducks paid homage to former Oregon defensive back Kenny Wheaton and a celebrated play, known as “The Pick,” by wearing “retro” 1994 uniforms. On October 22, 1994, Wheaton intercepted a pass and returned it for a touchdown late in a game against the University of Washington. The play sealed the team’s first conference championship in 37 years. And since then, the program has risen from conference standings bottom-dweller to perennial contender for national championships. The number and types of credentialed media in attendance at the 1994 game compared to those at the 2014 20-year anniversary against the Huskies were vastly different.

At the 1994 game against Washington, there were 43 different media outlets in attendance. Four of these were “National” media outlets, meaning they covered neither UW or Oregon on a regular basis, 14 of them were media outlets that regularly covered the Huskies’ games, and 25 of the credentialed media outlets in attendance regularly covered the Ducks’ games. Of the 25 outlets that regularly covered Oregon football games, 11 were print publications, nine were TV stations, and five were radio stations. See Figure 1

Figure 1: Media Outlets in Attendance at 1994 Oregon vs. Washington Game

Oregon vs. Washington 1994

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Komo Radio | 23. The Daily |
| 2. Prime Sports Northwest | 24. Fighting Ducks Review |
| 3. ABC Sports | 25. KFXR Radio |
| 4. Oregon Sports Network | 26. KJR Radio |
| 5. Daily Emerald | 27. KMGE Radio |
| 6. Register-Guard | 28. KPNW Radio |
| 7. The Oregonian | 29. KWVA Radio |
| 8. Salem Statesman-Journal | 30. Santa Barbara News |
| 9. Medford Mail-Tribune | 31. KOIN-TV |
| 10. Albany Democrat-Herald | 32. KGW-TV |
| 11. Roseburg news-Review | 33. KVAL-TV |
| 12. Vancouver Columbian | 34. KEZI-TV |
| 13. Grants Pass Daily Courier | 35. KMTR-TV |
| 14. Coos Bay World | 36. KATU-TV |
| 15. Seattle P-I | 37. KPTV |
| 16. Seattle Times | 38. KXL-Radio |
| 17. Associated Press | 39. KING-TV |
| 18. Tacoma News Tribune | 40. KOMO-TV |
| 19. Valley Daily News | 41. KIRO-TV |
| 20. Everett Herald | 42. KOBI-TV |
| 21. Bellevue Journal-American | 43. Sports Illustrated |
| 22. The Olympian | |

Courtesy of UO Football Communications Director Dave Williford

At the 2014 Oregon vs. UW game, 61 media outlets were in attendance. Eight of them were “national” media outlets, nine were media outlets that regularly covered the Huskies, and 44 media outlets in attendance regularly covered the Ducks for a 76% increase from the number of outlets covering the game 20 years before. Of the 44 outlets covering the Ducks, 11 of them were print publications, 11 were radio stations, 10 were TV stations, and 12 were Internet websites. See Figure 2

However, the 2014 Washington game was not the most heavily covered Oregon

game that season. That distinction went to the Oregon vs. Michigan State game, a matchup between two top ten teams that attracted 81 media outlets, 23 of which were national media.

Figure 2: Media Outlets in Attendance at 2014 Oregon vs. Washington Game

Oregon vs. Washington 2014

1. KYXN Radio
2. KQEN Radio
3. Fox Sports Radio 620
4. KCST Radio
5. KWVA Radio
6. KUGN Radio
7. 710 ESPN Radio
8. Cumulus Broadcasting
9. Alpha Broadcasting
10. KPNW Radio
11. 1080 The Fan
12. Em Valley Sports
13. Register-Guard
14. Bend-Bulletin
15. The Oregonian
16. Salem Statesman-Journal
17. Portland Tribune
18. Associated Press
19. Seattle Times
20. Tacoma News Tribune
21. Dawgman.com
22. UW Daily
23. Eugene Magazine
24. FishDuck
25. Oregonduckfootballnews.com
26. Exito Magazine
27. Gridirongirl.com
28. Albany D-H
29. Emerald Media Group
30. ESPN.com
31. Comcast SportsNet
32. Wall Street Journal
33. Educk.com
34. Ducks Sports Authority
35. Duck Territory
36. DuckNews.com
37. Addicted to Quack
38. Stadium Journey
39. Coos Bay World
40. KOIN-TV
41. KATU-TV
42. KGW-TV
43. KPTV
44. KVAL-TV
45. USA Today
46. KTVZ-TV
47. Eugene Daily News
48. Mighty Oregon
49. Nike
50. KXTG-The Game
51. KEZI-TV
52. DuckTV
53. Icon Sportswire
54. GoHuskies.com
55. Husky IMG Radio
56. Rivals.com
57. KOMO-TV
58. Linn-Benton Commuter
59. Lindy's
60. Pac-12 Network
61. KIRO-TV

Courtesy of UO Football Communications Director Dave Williford

While Oregon's on-field success has likely contributed to the increase in the number of outlets covering the Ducks, the influx of web-based media has also added to the trend. *Ducks Sports Authority*, the Oregon webpage for a site called Rivals.com, which focuses predominantly on college football and basketball recruiting, has provided football coverage to Duck fans since the site's creation in 2001. A.J. Jacobsen, the site's publisher, pointed to the decreased influence of newspapers and the increased use of computers and personal devices to obtain information, as the primary factors for why independent websites like his have been able to thrive.

"People won't pay for something they can get for free, and they were finding that they could get a lot of the information that you get from subscribing to a newspaper by perusing the Internet," Jacobsen said.²⁹

Ducks Sports Authority was the second "non-traditional," Internet-based media outlet to start covering the Ducks, following a similar recruiting-based website called *E-Duck*. According to Jacobsen, by creating a site that tailored to fans' interest in recruiting, they were able to tap into a niche demographic that was available. He said that fans not only want to consume content, but also want to be a part of the conversation as well.

"Over time, you build up loyal constituencies that enjoy coming back and getting your information, and going onto a familiar forum and talking about it," he said.

According to Jacobsen, Twitter has also greatly affected the coverage of non-traditional media, like himself, as well.³⁰

²⁹ Jacobsen, A.J. Telephone interview. 23 Apr. 2015

³⁰ Ibid

“In the past five years, it went from players announcing their commitments to a team, through guys like me, to making their commitment announcements almost exclusively through Twitter,” he said. “What that means is that you do have to keep an eye on Twitter because it becomes a game of who’s watching it the closest.”³¹

Fans also use Twitter to get their news, and in recent years, the social media site has become a significant factor in how universities distribute information.³² Known for its innovation and being on the cutting edge, the Oregon athletic department, embraced the online platform for promoting the program and the Oregon public image -- or “brand.” Craig Pintens, the Oregon athletic department’s Marketing and Public Relations Director, says its increased presence on social media has been “immeasurably” beneficial to the Ducks’ status as a household name and Oregon’s ability to engage with fans. According to the athletic department, Oregon has the most Instagram followers and YouTube subscribers of any college athletics program in the country, and top ten audiences for both Twitter and Facebook.³³ But Pintens claims they don’t get caught up in the numbers.

“We’re more about influence, and for us, we want to find people who are influential who are spreading the word about our brand,” Pintens said. “So, when LeBron James takes a picture of himself wearing Oregon gear and Tweets that out, or puts it out on Instagram, that is spreading our brand more than anything we can do.”³⁴

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ University of Oregon Athletic Department

³⁴ Pintens

Changes in Access

After taking over as head coach in 2009, Chip Kelly led Oregon football to new territory. He coached the Ducks to BCS games in each of his four seasons at the helm, and three outright conference championships. Kelly had an overall record of 46-7 in those four seasons and in recognition of his coaching achievements, was awarded Associated Press Coach of the year in 2010.³⁵ Now the head coach of the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, Kelly is widely considered a brilliant football mind and an offensive genius. But Kelly left his mark at Oregon in other ways as well. During his tenure, media access was decreased with practices being closed, injuries no longer disclosed, and one-on-one interviews limited. And the limits on access left a sour taste with many media members who experienced the changes.

Prior to the 1997 season, Oregon football practices were completely open to all media.³⁶ Local TV stations could shoot as much video as they wanted, and players and coaches were accessible for interviews during and after practice.³⁷ But in '97, Oregon closed Wednesday practices, which was only the start of more media access limitations. Around the same time, restrictions were put on what TV stations were allowed to shoot during the practices that were open, and they were also limited to only one camera at games.³⁸

“That’s about the same time they started to get good, and there became more interest from the Portland stations,” Ward said.³⁹

³⁵ sports-reference.com

³⁶ Williford

³⁷ McKim

³⁸ McGillvray

³⁹ Ward

In general, the more on-field success the program experienced, the less access media received. According to Ward, Oregon football highlights were initially only of interest to local stations, but as the program began to improve, its highlights started to pop up on ESPN's SportsCenter more and more.⁴⁰

Todd McKim, who covered the Ducks for KEZI-TV from 1980-1991 and KVAL-TV from 1991-2005, points to the 1998 Aloha Bowl as a turning point for the program.

"That was the first time they unveiled the new, cool uniforms. That's when it started to change, not like it has now, but that was the beginning," he said.⁴¹ "From 1997 to 1999 you could see the program starting to build, improving each season, and then the extra excitement with the uniforms. You had the die-hard fans who were already there, but there became many more people who jumped on the bandwagon and then they wanted more information. Not only are the fans jumping on, but here comes national media, and the Internet, and it just mushroomed from there."⁴²

As the spotlight turned to Oregon football, access was gradually scaled back. But the most dramatic changes occurred with Kelly's arrival as head coach in 2009. During fall camp of the 2009 season, practices were open to media, but by 2010, all practices became closed, as Kelly claimed that the media's presence was "intrusive to the team's ability to prepare."⁴³ These changes were consistent with trends at other programs across the country, but that didn't make it any less frustrating for members of the media, who had previously been allowed to cover practice, and now no longer

⁴⁰ Ward

⁴¹ McKim

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Withers

could. This especially affected TV reporters, who for years had relied on getting video footage during practices. Other limiting policies put in place during Kelly's tenure included, Oregon no longer disclosing injuries, and media being required to request interviews with players at least 24 hours in advance.

Joe Giansante who covered the Ducks for Oregon Sports Network, KMTR-TV, and KUGN Radio from 1992-2010, also served as the Senior Associate Athletic Director at the U of O from 2007-2012. Giansante pointed to not only the Internet but also poor reporting as reasons for limiting access. He said the combination of the rapid spread of information and the inexperienced nature of student reporters stringing for websites "doing jobs that they are often unqualified to do" were two factors that led to football coaches not trusting the media.⁴⁴

"The root of it is the lack of trust and the competitive advantage or disadvantage that coaches feel they have by allowing access to external media and divulging injuries," Giansante said.⁴⁵

But for most traditional media the changes were frustrating.

"I've been doing this for the better part of two decades and I've seen a lot of changes, and a lot of them aren't good," Ward said. "It's not fun to just wait outside the Oregon practice facility and wait for guys to come out. That's not why you get into it."⁴⁶

Bellamy said media received much more individual access to players through the Mike Bellotti era, who coached the Ducks from 1995-2008. He said athletes of that

⁴⁴ Giansante

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ward

era would remember individual reporters and he wonders if today's athletes recognize a single reporter, because there are so many, and access is so limited.⁴⁷

Even Jerry Allen, the Radio Play-by-Play voice of the Ducks for the last 27 years, acknowledged in a 2014 article published in *The Oregonian*, that coach Kelly was more private in regards to media access, in comparison to current head coach, Mark Helfrich.

"For some of us on the staff, we feel a little closer to the program now in that Chip Kelly was very closed, and it was all about the team, and they were sort of tight and separate from everybody else that you didn't get entrance to being a part of what they were doing. You're more on the outside as a media person or a fan," he said. "Mark Helfrich has been more inclusive in allowing some of us who've been on the staff to feel like we're more a part of it."⁴⁸

Bob Clark, who covered Oregon football for the *Register Guard* as far back as 1976, said that the gradual decrease in one-on-one access with athletes has made it more difficult to do feature stories on individual players.⁴⁹ Clark said he could remember a time when media representatives could go into the locker room after a game to do a one-on-one interview with a key player. Now, all post-game interviews are conducted in a group setting and locker rooms aren't open.

Jacobsen, of *Ducks Sports Authority*, said that he felt the restrictions on access came to full completion with the construction of Oregon's new practice facility in 2013,

⁴⁷ Bellamy

⁴⁸ Tokito, Mike. "Before Jerry Allen makes the call for Oregon Ducks, there's always a different kind of call to make: Media Mike Check" *The Oregonian* 2 Dec. 2014: Print.

⁴⁹ Clark, Bob. Telephone interview. 13 Oct. 2014

which was “intentionally built in a way so that there’s no way to stand and watch practices” from the outside.⁵⁰

“The way I look at it is that Oregon is staffed with state employees. And here they are giving themselves sole, exclusive access and sole rights to distribution of information about Oregon Duck football,” Jacobsen said.⁵¹ KVAL’s Ward agrees.

“It’s a state-run institution, paid for by tax payers, and they are leaning towards turning themselves into private entities.”⁵² Ward claimed that Oregon has the least amount of media access of any program in the Pac-12.

A poll of Football Communication Directors across the conference indicates that Oregon is not alone in limiting media access to practice and information regarding injuries.

See table 1

⁵⁰ Jacobsen

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ward

Table 1: Pac-12 Media Access and Injury Policies Poll

School	Openness of Practices to Media	Issue Injury Reports
	Closed	No
	Closed	No
	Open for first 15 minutes for TV stations to get B-role	No
	Open through 2014 season, but expected to be closed with new coach.	No, but expected to in 2015
	Open for one practice a week	Yes
	Closed	No
	Open for 2 of 3 days during the week (video for first 20 minutes)	No
	Open (Can shoot drills but not 11-on-11 or Tweet)	No
	Open once a week for first 20 minutes	Yes
	Open for first hour of practice (can only shoot drills)	No
	2 of 3 practices open for first 30 minutes for cameras	Yes
	Closed	No

Poll conducted from 4/2/15 – 4/8/15 by McLean Cannon.

Based on these two qualifications, practice access and injury information, Washington, Stanford, and Utah all have the same level of media limitations as Oregon. The results of the poll might also suggest further research as to whether there is a correlation between media access and creating a competitive disadvantage. Colorado, which has one of the most open media access policies in the conference, (issuing a weekly injury report and allowing reporters access to practices twice a week) finished last in the 2014 Pac-12 standings, at 0-9,⁵³ while Oregon and Stanford, two of the teams that allow the least amount of media access in the Pac-12 (completely closed practices and no injury report), have combined to win the last six conference championships.

The decrease in access has affected members of the media differently. Giansante acknowledged that the limited access did make the job of a journalist more challenging, but “a lot of reporters ended up just complaining about it rather than looking for more stories to do,” he said.⁵⁴

Though for some journalists, the changes had minimal effect. Rob Mosley, who covered Duck Football as the beat writer for the *Register Guard* from 2000-2012 before being hired as the editor and chief of GoDucks.com, said that even after the policy changes, he never had any difficulty getting in touch with players for interviews.⁵⁵ Ken Goe agreed that the changes in access never significantly affected him that much either.

“It’s changed a little bit for us, but ultimately, Oregon’s been pretty cooperative as far as interviews,” Goe said. “Yeah, you have to call 24 hours in advance, but that

⁵³ Pac-12.com

⁵⁴ Giansante

⁵⁵ Mosley

didn't really change anything. And if you obey the rules, for the most part, you could get who you wanted and have as much time as you needed, I found."⁵⁶

However, Goe said that the program's decision to stop disclosing injuries to the media was a different matter, as it interfered with his ability to be accurate as a reporter and give the readers the full story. Goe remembered that when Rich Brooks was the head coach (1977-1994), he was meticulous about reporting injuries because he had been in the NFL before coming to Oregon, "and that's just how they did it there."⁵⁷

Media access rules in the NFL are considerably different than the ones in place at Oregon.

NFL Comparison

The most significant difference in the way that professional football teams handle media access is that the NFL sets media policies that all teams in the league are required to follow. These policies serve as minimums for the amount of access and information that teams are required to provide to the media. After that, it's up to the coaches to decide how much more information or access they want to provide, but at least some access is guaranteed. According to the 2014 NFL Media Relations Policy:

"Following the completion of Week 2 of the NFL preseason schedule and through the regular season and playoffs, daily practice (Monday through Friday) must be open to local media (those who regularly cover the team) for at least the first 30 minutes or until the start of "team" work. It is permissible to limit the videotaping or photographing of certain portions of practice. Starting the week prior to the opening of the regular season, clubs are required to designate on the NFL Intranet site and issue to local media the names of those players

⁵⁶ Goe

⁵⁷ Ibid

who missed any portion of 11-on-11 team or individual work on the specified days noted in the NFL Injury Report policy.”⁵⁸

Lindsay Jones has covered the NFL for *USA Today* since 2012, served as a Denver Broncos beat writer for the *Denver Post*, from 2008-2012, as well as covered University of Florida football for the *Palm Beach Post* from 2007-2008. Having covered both college and professional football, Jones said that in general, NFL media access policies are significantly better than college’s.

“I think college beat writers would be shocked at the amount of access that you get in the NFL as oppose to covering colleges,” she said. “I’m at the point now that I’ve been covering the NFL long enough that I can’t imagine going back to college beat writing.”⁵⁹

According to Derek Boyko, the Public Relations Director for the Philadelphia Eagles, their practices are open for the first couple of periods, which are made up of individual drills, but that once the team goes into a “team setting” of offense vs. defense, practices are closed to the media. “That’s pretty standard throughout the league,” Boyko said. “Most teams, if not all, have it open for just a couple of periods for the purpose of being able to get video and still shots for the news organizations that cover us.”⁶⁰

As far as injury reports, Boyko said that teams are required by the league to announce the body part injured and whether the player participated in practice and to what extent -- full participant, limited participant, or did not participate. If there’s any discrepancy, the league has the right to review tapes of the team’s practice to determine

⁵⁸ 2014 NFL Media Access Policies

⁵⁹ Jones, Lindsay. Telephone interview. 21 Apr. 2015.

⁶⁰ Boyko, Derek. Telephone interview. 21 Apr. 2015

if the player was practicing in the way they were listed on the report. “They’re pretty stringent about what you report. You really can’t mess with it too much,” he said.⁶¹

However, Jones said that NFL injury reports often do get “fudged” by teams.

“It’s crazy the way they will try to get around the rules if they think that there is some kind of competitive advantage to be gained,” she said. “They’ll put a guy on the injury report, saying, ‘Oh, he’s getting treatment on his ankle.’ Then you come to find out later he actually has a broken rib or something. They will lie about it fairly regularly. The league frowns upon it and they’ll try to fine teams if they find evidence that they’ve been lying about the injury report, but teams will try to do that all the time to get around it.”⁶²

While Jones said she hasn’t covered the Eagles very much, people who do cover the team regularly indicate that coach Kelly gives minimum access.⁶³

“His press conferences are fantastic. He’s so interesting and engaging, and talks a million words a minute, but he’s not a guy who’s regularly available,” she said. “It’s definitely ‘I’m here because I’ve got to be right now, and I’m going to do my bare minimum.’”⁶⁴

As far as player and coach access, it’s all laid out in the league’s media policies.

“Players must be available to the media following every game and regularly during the practice week as required under league rules and their contracts. It is not permissible for any player or any group of players to boycott the media. Star players, or other players with unusually heavy media demands, must be available to the media that regularly cover their teams at least once during the practice week in addition to their required post-game media availability. This applies to a

⁶¹ Boyko

⁶² Jones

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Ibid

maximum of one or two players per team only. The minimum for such players does not include other required media obligations such as visiting team conference calls, network production meetings, and national media interviews arranged by the team.”⁶⁵

“In addition to holding a news conference after every game, head coaches must be available on a regular basis to the media that regularly cover the team. At a minimum, the head coach must be available to the local media at least four days during each practice week from training camp through the end of the season. The head coach must be available to local media the day after all games including Thursday, Saturday and Monday night games— either in person or via conference call.”⁶⁶

Jones said that if you’re a beat writer who regularly covers a team, she thinks that you should be able to get one-on-one interviews with anybody you want during the week.

“You can actually have regular conversations with players on a regular basis,” she said. “You get to know them, and they get to know you, and you can build a relationship.”⁶⁷

She also said that there is a significant difference in the way that NFL teams treat local reporters, who cover the team on a regular basis, compared to national media. For example, according to Jones, Seattle’s practices are only open to local media.⁶⁸

“That’s a fairly common thing where teams will allow only the reporters that regularly cover the team,” she said. “That’s just one of those things where they feel like they have a better agreement or trust with the local reporters.”⁶⁹

However, this is the opposite of how Oregon handles the dynamic between the local and national media, often catering to the outlets that can get them more national exposure.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ 2014 Media Access Policies

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Jones

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Pintens

National Exposure

Pat McGillvray, who covered Oregon football for KVAL-TV from 1981-1997, said that because of Oregon's recent on-field success and national prominence, they're now in a position to "call the shots."

"In the past, it was whatever it takes to get people to go to the games. They don't have to care about media coverage as much because they are so popular," he said.⁷¹

Ryan Therrell, the former Webmaster for GoDucks.com, the athletic department's website, said that it's an interesting time in Oregon athletics because of the success of their programs.

"When your stadium is half filled, you're desperate for all of the attention that anyone can create for you. That's not the case anymore. Some of that success enables us to toot our own horn," he said.⁷²

Bellamy, of the *Register Guard*, echoes this sentiment, stating that Oregon realizes it doesn't need the local media as much as it wants the national media, using the example of when the university gave national giants *Sports Illustrated* and the *New York Times* first access to tour and report on their new football performance center.

"That was such a slap in the face to the local media, but they don't really care anymore, because they see themselves from more of a national marketing standpoint," Bellamy said.⁷³

⁷¹ McGillvray

⁷² Therrell

⁷³ Bellamy

“We were concerned that if we gave local media (first access), that national media wouldn’t want to come (later),” Phil Weiler, then the UO’s assistant vice president for strategic communications, was quoted as saying in a 2013 *Register Guard* article, written by Mark Baker. In the article, Baker wrote, “To carry out its plan, the UO contacted *Sports Illustrated* and told the prestigious national magazine it could have exclusive first media access to the latest extravagant, multimillion-dollar gift from Knight as long as *Sports Illustrated* would promise to publish a multipage spread on it, Weiler said. When *Sports Illustrated* hit newsstands and homes, the “Leading Off” section in the front of the magazine contained six pages of photographs of the UO facility by *Sports Illustrated* photographer John McDonough.”⁷⁴

UO Associate Journalism Professor John Russial disagreed with the university’s decision to give first access to national media, saying that it threatens UO’s credibility as well as its relationship with the community and local media. In a 2013 editorial piece, published in the *Register Guard*, Russial said that “in any community, local media are in the best position to cover local news.”

“I’ve always thought some things are more important than branding and promotion, especially when it comes to public entities. And holding local media at bay to allow a national media exclusive access raises additional concerns. Local media offer background and perspective on local issues that national media organizations, no matter how good they are, cannot approach. Moreover, the national media might be around on big stories, even on game day, but they’re nowhere to be seen on other days. Local media are on the scene every day, and the university’s compromising that ongoing relationship for a short publicity bump on a big story is not

⁷⁴ Baker, Mark. “Local media shut out of first tours as part of UO’s strategy.” *The Register Guard* 3 Aug. 2013: Print.

in the best interests of the community, which is served by local media, and probably not the best way to handle media relations,” Russial said.⁷⁵

Pintens admits that the department gives priority to national media, because of the greater influence they have as far as promoting Oregon as a “national brand.”

“I don’t wake up every morning thinking, ‘How I can please the local media?’” Pintens said. “Sorry, but we go where the eyeballs are.”⁷⁶

Giansante, reiterated that college athletics is a business.

“We’re doing everything we can to promote our student athletes, brand our student athletes, get them great exposure, to recruit, and get information out to people,” he said.⁷⁷

Williford predicted that as time goes on, access to players and coaches from the outside media is probably going to become even more limited.

Adapting to Reduced Access

Clark, of the *Register Guard*, said the decrease in access to players has forced journalists to focus more on “issue” stories.⁷⁸ Giansante said some reporters did a good job of covering more features, and building stories off game access, while radio talk shows, he contends, adapted by attempting to become the voice of negativity.⁷⁹

Prior to practices closing to the media, *Ducks Sports Authority* focused on practice coverage as well as recruiting, but with the decrease in access, Jacobsen said

⁷⁵ Russial, John. “Exclusive access deal threatens UO’s credibility.” *The Register Guard* 8 Aug. 2013: Print.

⁷⁶ Pintens

⁷⁷ Giansante

⁷⁸ Clark

⁷⁹ Giansante

that he adapted by focusing solely on recruiting, while also perfecting his one-on-one interview skills.

“As a journalist, you have to say, ‘Ok, they took practice coverage away, but they are giving us interviews.’ I decided that I was going to be the best interviewer out there. I’m going to prepare for every interview. I’d re-read his bio, I’d try to find anything that had been recently written on him, and then by listening to yourself interview people many, many times, you learn what’s bad and what’s good, and you don’t do the bad stuff anymore. Yeah, I’m not going to sell any more subscriptions by being a great interviewer of athletes and coaches, but it’s what they allow us to do, so why not be the best at it?”⁸⁰

Broadcast Rights

KVAL-TV’s Ward said he’s not sure if local TV stations will be able to survive in the future, as he believes the future of TV media coverage will depend on whoever has purchased the broadcast rights.

“When it comes to broadcasts, I think the future is going to lie with whoever is paying for the rights to said event,” Ward said. “For example, when the U.S. Olympic trials were in Eugene and NBC rolled into town and shut everybody else out because they bought the rights. Ten years down the road, I don’t know what it’s going to look like. I’m not sure that local TV Sportscasters are going to be around much longer because of rights issues.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ Jacobsen

⁸¹ Ward

The Pac-12 Network, a cable television network that was launched by the Pac-12 conference in 2012, is an example of a network that controls the TV broadcast rights to all Oregon sporting events. Another example is Oregon IMG Sports Network, a multimedia and marketing rights holder, that purchased the rights to Oregon broadcast rights in 2009, and in a sense, acts as a “middle man” between advertisers and the university. Joey McMurry, who has served as a broadcaster and radio talk show host for Oregon IMG Sports Network since 2013, said that both IMG and the Pac-12 Network get priority with any interview and access over local, traditional media because they own the rights to do it.

“Because there’s so many obligations for media purposes, and there’s only so much time in the day for coaches and players to do interviews, local media is lower on the totem pole, because there’s entities like IMG and Pac-12 Network, who have paid for the rights,” he said.⁸²

McMurry admitted that there is some grey area as to whether IMG is considered external media, even though they aren’t connected to the athletic department. “That’s where it get’s iffy,” he said. “We’re technically outside media because we’re not paid by the athletic department, like Rob Mosley or the athletic communications guys are, but at the same time, we’re traveling with the team all the time.”⁸³

The Pac-12 is said to be exploring a new conference-controlled model for multimedia rights that would eliminate the need for schools to do deals with third

⁸² McMurry, Joey. Telephone interview. 17 May 2014.

⁸³ Ibid

parties such as IMG.⁸⁴ Under the model being studied, Pac-12 schools would take back their multimedia rights as their contracts expire and coordinate with the conference on how to manage and sell those rights. According to an article published in *SportsBusiness Global Journal* in April, 2015, “The conference wants to do this because it believes schools could remove the third parties and keep more of the gross revenue from sales, rather than sharing it with rights holders. If the Pac-12 moves forward with the plan, it could have sweeping ramifications for the schools, the conference and the rights holders, whose ability to exploit those rights is core to their business.”⁸⁵ And with the Oregon IMG Sports Network’s contract deal coming up in 2017-18, McMurry said the future of the multimedia rights holder at Oregon is “in limbo.”

“It’s really up in the air because we don’t know what the Pac-12 is going to decide to do,” he said. “If they’re going to say, ‘Well, we’re not going to have anymore marketing agencies doing anything. We’re going to do everything in-house, then there won’t be an IMG at Oregon anymore. It’ll just be an ‘in-house’ broadcaster.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Smith, Michael & Ourand, John. “Will Pac-12 blow up rights model?.” *SportsBusiness Daily Global Journal* 6 Apr. 2015. Web.

⁸⁵ Smith & Ourand

⁸⁶ McMurry

Trend of “In-house” Media

All sports teams, college and professional, are interested in being able to control the message they put out to their fans, as it gives them an opportunity to promote the positive aspects of their program. Of the 32 NFL teams, every single one of them has their own website, TV station, and social media outlet.⁸⁷ Boyko claims that the Eagles “in-house” media covers the team like any other media outlet, without any special access.

“They’re obviously going to be slanted more towards positive feature stories, but they’re going to cover the news just like any other entity that’s in the business,” he said.⁸⁸

Oregon’s “in-house” media, GoDucks.com, was created in 1998, originally designed for live, online-streaming of Duck games. The athletic department did a complete overhaul of the site in 2008, when it started producing a daily sports show and creating media content. GoDucks.com has continued to make significant changes over the last several years and according to the athletic department, the site has averaged an increase in traffic of 89% per year since 2008.⁸⁹

“It’s probably a combination of the teams doing really well and trying to focus on better content and a more user-friendly site,” Therrell, the site’s former webmaster said. “Our viewership is huge. You can compare our traffic to the *Register Guard*’s. Our traffic does pretty well.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ NFL.com/media-guides

⁸⁸ Boyko

⁸⁹ University of Oregon Athletic Department

⁹⁰ Therrell

In 2012 Mosley was hired to be the Editor in Chief of the website. Mosley is the only member of the media with access to Oregon's football practices, and he writes a daily practice report, which is published on GoDucks.com. Clark said Mosley's credibility from his days at the *Register Guard* enabled him to be trusted immediately by Duck fans.⁹¹

Therrell said the Internet has changed the way the university distributes information because they can now control the message that reaches the fans.

"The university used to be so beholden to what was written in the paper, and now, you can get the story straight from the source without worrying about how that reporter may or may not have skewed the facts or adjusted things to make the story more headline grabbing," he said. "It enables us to be able to help control a story, to put the facts out before opinions are made elsewhere."⁹²

According to Williford, the website was created out of frustration from the media not always getting the story right.

"By and large, it's an attempt to be able to dictate the message to your fans. Forget the speculation, this is the source," he said.⁹³

Mosley pointed to the "aggressive" and "antagonistic" tone that media took with the coverage of the LaGarrette Blount incident against Boise State in 2009* and the Willie Lyles recruiting violations scandal in 2010,* as jumping off points for when and why the athletic department decided to take media coverage into their own hands.

⁹¹ Clark

⁹² Therrell

⁹³ Williford

* After a nationally televised, season-opening loss to Boise State in 2009, Running Back LaGarrette Blount was suspended for punching an opponent and angrily confronting fans.

* In 2013, Oregon received a 3-year probation for their infractions case involving recruiting violations by Texas talent scout Willie Lyles.

“Some people, internally, thought that the media painted those situations with some pretty broad brushes, and insinuated some things that people took issue with,” Mosley said. “There’s been some antagonism over the years between the two sides that created more of a gulf than there used to be.”⁹⁴

“That’s their propaganda machine,” Ward said, referring to GoDucks.com. “They’ve gone forward with basically the intention of eliminating the competition. That’s the source to get the news. I honestly think, looking back, closing practices was the beginning of the manipulation to turn GoDucks.com into the only source on Duck football.”

UO Professor of Media Studies, Janet Wasko, said that the increased role of internal media is problematic when considering the role of the press in covering news.

“If the press is supposed to serve as the "fourth estate," then it needs to be independent and at least try to be objective. If there is only one "voice" for any kind of news and/or others are restricted, that does not always serve the public -- especially if that "voice" is produced by the individual/institution being covered. This is especially problematic if the institution is a "public institution" like public universities,” Wasko said.⁹⁵

McKim said there’s no question that journalism is going toward athletic programs having their own media that focuses on “feel good” stories that promote the positive side of the program.

“Every school in the conference has people assigned to write blogs and some sort of video production. It’s great for the fan. So many different ways to get

⁹⁴ Mosley

⁹⁵ Wasko, Janet. E-mail interview. 14 May 2015.

information and you don't have to read the paper.”⁹⁶

“Every sports franchise is going to have a Rob Mosley because they want to control the story,” Bellamy said. “In the past, an Oregon (Sports Information Director) might suggest a story to do on a player, but now they want to tell it themselves. Now, they are in essence a competing media, and that changes the dynamic.”⁹⁷

However, Jacobsen says he views GoDucks.com as more of a mild annoyance than a competitor.

“They're doing their own thing, and we're not allowed to do that thing, so we're not competing. I'm getting kind of used to it, but I don't think I'll ever admire it or like it,” he said⁹⁸

Goe says he also views GoDucks.com as a “low level irritant” because of the access that Mosely gets that local media do not, but he doesn't think it hurts traditional media significantly because of what in-house media is unable to report on.

“I know they want to be able to control their message, but I don't think that works ultimately,” he said. “Most fans are sophisticated enough to understand the difference between somebody who is writing for the school website and somebody who's independent. It really hurts the credibility of someone like Mosley when a story breaks that the university would just as soon wasn't a story, so he's in a position to either ignore it or try to spin it to the university's advantage, which is a real difficult position to be in. When Oregon loses a game to Arizona, everyone wants to know what's wrong. There was a huge appetite for stories. Rob can't do those kind of stories.

⁹⁶ McKim

⁹⁷ Bellamy

⁹⁸ Jacobsen

Rob's in a position to say, this is what is right. He loses independence and the ability to follow a story where it leads. He's got to be a university spokesman in essence.⁹⁹

But Jacobsen disagrees that Mosley's media role hurts his credibility, because he gave up his designation as a journalist.

"Rob's got a job and he's got an employer. He has very high journalistic ethics, but he's not a true journalist in his role right now, and I think he's grasped that by now." His job is to be a reporter that has certain restrictions that no normal reporter could accept."¹⁰⁰

Jones said that most of the people who provide internal media come from journalism backgrounds even though they aren't able to take the same critical approach that traditional journalists are able to.

"They are trained like journalists and they kind of do the work of journalists during the week, but they don't have free reign to write whatever they want. What they're writing is going to be filtered through a team lens."¹⁰¹

Giansante distinguishes the difference between "in-house" media and traditional "objective" media as the difference between news and information.

"We're not interested in putting stuff that's false out, but we also want to get information out that we think our fans care about and is important to the mission of the university. Some might say you lose the objectivity in media, but I would say you lost that a long time ago when people like *E-duck* came in and got equal access as a local TV station. They're getting the same access, and as many or more people consuming

⁹⁹ Goe

¹⁰⁰ Jacobsen

¹⁰¹ Jones

the content on *E-duck* than KVAL news.”¹⁰²

According to the Nielsen ratings from May, 2014, a 6 pm KVAL newscast reaches just over 16,000 households a night on average. And according to the Oregon athletic department, in 2012, GoDucks.com received an average of just over 132,000 page views a day with more than 19,000 individual users.

“People in TV may have an inflated idea of how people are consuming information,” Giansante said. “The importance from a university perspective and from the operation of a business and branding has shifted. It becomes more important to operate your own entity than it does to cater to a local TV station.”¹⁰³

Jacobsen said that he thinks GoDucks.com has the most web traffic of any media outlet covering the Ducks due to the exclusive nature of the practice reporting and photography.

The Future

“It’s not going away. I mean, if anything, I feel like it’s only going to get bigger and bigger,” Jones, of *USA Today*, said, in reference to “in-house” media. “People are going to want to promote their own internal journalism as much as possible. That makes the job of traditional media that much more important, to be vigilant and taking that critical eye, because the teams want to control the message as much as possible.”¹⁰⁴

Some traditional media do see the positives in the trend, as it creates jobs that wouldn’t be there otherwise at a time when journalism jobs are at a premium. But that doesn’t mean that they personally would want to do those jobs.

¹⁰² Giansante

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Jones

“I don’t know exactly what my advice to college students is, as far as if you should take this job working for a team or not,” Jones said. “Because those are jobs, and in traditional media, there’s a lot fewer jobs.”¹⁰⁵

“In one way, it’s good, because journalism jobs are drying up, but it’s not a job I’d want to do because you lose your independence and your ability to write what you actually believe is happening,” Goe said. “You give that up if you’re going to be a part of the propaganda for that university.”¹⁰⁶

“You have to hope that readers will see through that stuff, and if they want the full picture of what’s going on with their team, that they’ll get a more well-rounded view of media and they’ll go explore other places,” Jones added. “I’m sure teams would love it if fans only got their information from their own website, because they’d be able to only have their message out there.”¹⁰⁷

Every source, including the athletic department, agreed there will always be some form of objective journalism, although the platform by which it will be published is less clear.

“I think no matter how hard the GoDucks.coms of the world try to squeeze out the local media, they’re never going to completely do it, because fans always want some unfiltered voices and analysis that are not under the constrictions of the athletic department,” Jacobsen said. “They’re doing everything they can to control it more than ever, but with the immediacy of the Internet and Twitter, they can’t control that.”

¹⁰⁵ Jones

¹⁰⁶ Goe

¹⁰⁷ Jones

“There will always be objective media, but the ones who seem to be winning in big markets are the ones who have given up on the idea that they’re going to be this hard-hitting news team when it comes to the hometown team,” Giansante said. “They’re not going to be cheerleaders, but they’re going to give people the information they want, and give them stories that are positive about their programs.”¹⁰⁸

However, not all members of the media hold this opinion. John Canzano, a columnist for the *Oregonian*, radio talk show host on Portland’s 750 AM “The Game,” and sports commentator on KGW-TV, in Portland, has gained a reputation for taking a critical approach in his coverage of Oregon athletics. In October, 2014, after the Ducks lost to Arizona, Canzano was especially critical of the Oregon coaching staff, indicating that Oregon’s most successful era in the program’s history had come to an end.

“Gone is the Chip Kelly edge and creativity on offense. Absent are Nick Allioti’s gambling and guts on defense. The overall performance was sloppy. All that was familiar from that most successful Oregon era ever were some of Kelly’s leftover players and that signature “O” at midfield. Right now, the university of Oregon shouldn’t be worried about whether it can climb with one loss back into the national playoff hunt it should be worried about whether the coaching staff has what it takes to keep Oregon as relevant as it should be. And I can’t say that I blame Duck fans today who aren’t so sure about the future of Oregon football.”¹⁰⁹

That season, the Ducks went on to win nine straight games and reached the national championship game. But Canzano wasn’t any less critical of Kelly when he was coach at Oregon. In an early 2010 airing of one of his talk radio shows, the “Bald-Faced Truth,” Canzano criticized Kelly in regards to the lack of discipline in the Oregon

¹⁰⁸ Giansante

¹⁰⁹ Canzano, John. “Oregon loses to Arizona, house that Chip Kelly built listing.” *The Oregonian* 2 Oct. 2014. Print.

program. The program had recently seen an abundance of issues regarding the conduct of players off the field. Speaking with pure bias and opinion, Canzano went as far to say that many in the athletic department questioned the leadership abilities of Kelly in a major football program.¹¹⁰

And in 2007 when Canzano took the job at 750 KXL, a radio station owned by Paul Allen, the owner of the Portland Trail Blazers a team he also covers, Canzano addressed the potential conflict of interest in the *Willamette Week*.¹¹¹

"The Blazers must have big-time confidence in their product because I've been granted 100-percent editorial control, guaranteeing you that you're going to get me as unfiltered and authentic on the radio as I am in print," Canzano wrote.¹¹²

Jacobsen said part of the future of journalism and covering local teams will depend on what happens with the newspaper. "Their fall has been dramatic, but where's the bottom? Will their attempt to become Internet entities instead of paper delivered entities pay off, or will that fold?"¹¹³

"There's always going to be a place for independent journalism that's not part of the university," Goe said. "Now, what form that's going to take is the bigger question. I don't think even people who are running the big media chains have any idea. They're flailing around trying to figure out how to stay profitable. And it could be that they won't. It could be that news sources will be a million little websites. And if that

¹¹⁰ Dodson, Phillip. "The Oregonian's John Canzano: The Leader in Critical Writing." *Bleacher Report*. 9 Aug. 2010

¹¹¹ Wolf, Josh. "Objectivity, transparency, and the future of journalism." 15 Aug. 2007. Cnet.com

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Jacobsen

happens, that will take journalism back to its roots when newspapers first started. There will always be a need for someone to tell the truth as best they can.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Goe

Conclusion

Media coverage of Oregon football has evolved from a handful of local TV broadcasters, daily newspapers and radio stations, to the point where the Internet has become the place to go for Oregon-football related information and content. Sports journalists have been forced to adapt to producing more web-oriented content to survive and fit with the trend towards digital content. Social media websites, like Twitter, have become a significant aspect of coverage. News has evolved into a more instantaneous, 140-character limited, Tweets, with an emphasis on being the first to break a story.

These changes in technology coupled with the growth in size of the media pool have caused athletic departments to tighten up media access and be less forthcoming with information that could provide a competitive disadvantage to their team. This decrease in access has affected local, traditional media much more than national media, which are sometimes given special priority. Oregon's on-field success and national popularity has allowed Oregon to cater more to the national media, as it no longer relies on local coverage

In recent years, the Oregon athletic department has also taken media coverage into its own hands, with internal media produced by the athletic department. This "in-house" media can control the message shared with fans and promote positive aspects of the program. This is a trend that most athletic departments and professional teams have adopted, and in Oregon's case, it sometimes puts the local media at a disadvantage.

Traditional media's role in covering the Ducks seems to be shrinking. However, most people believe that there will always be a place for objective media, outside of the

athletic department, to provide coverage, because fans want a more unbiased perspective as a supplement to the information they can get from the team's website. What form this objective media will take is uncertain, as traditional media are evolving in terms of their identity and in their methods of providing coverage.

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