The 2024 Oregon Ducks football season has been nothing short of spectacular. Under head coach Dan Lanning, the Ducks have dominated throughout their season in the Big Ten, proving they belong among our nation's elite collegiate programs. The Ducks completed a perfect 13-0 season so far, only the second time in program history, simulating their 2010 achievement. Joining the Big Ten this season was a significant shift for Oregon that required adaptations in facing a whole new slate of opponents. However, the Ducks have thrived in their new conference, securing the number one seed in the nation.

Oregon's defense has been relentless, with a front seven that dominates the line of attack and a second that can shut down even the most active passing attempts. Led by players like Jordan Burch and Matayo Uiagalelei, the defense tied a school record with ten sacks in the Washington game. Their balanced offense, featuring strong contributions from running back Jordan James and receivers like Tez Johnson, propelled them to victory in high-stakes matchups throughout the season. Quarterback Dillon Gabriel was significant in the Ducks' success, throwing multiple touchdown passes and staying consistent under pressure.

The Ducks' 45-37 victory over Penn State in the Big Ten Championship Game solidified their conference title and their perfect 13-0 record. Their playoff success will depend on maintaining their consistency they had throughout the season. Still, with a deep roster, strong coaching, and a dedicated work ethic, Oregon appears ready to make a serious run for the national championship.

Wide receiver Justius Lowe, number 14, has been a rising player in the Ducks' lineup. He is a redshirt sophomore from Lake Oswego, Oregon, and just recently scored his first touchdown. I have the pleasure of knowing Justius and was allowed to interview him about his experience on the team.

Reflecting on his journey and the impact of playing under Coach Dan Lanning, Lowe shared some insights that help show the program's winning culture. “Playing for Dan Lanning has been amazing. The mindset he brings to the table is what you want from a head coach. He is always preaching growth and getting better every day. It’s all about hard work and being consistent, and with football, there will be days where it feels the same, or your body hurts, but at the end of the day, you have to progress and take a step forward to achieve your goals. He brings a winning mentality to the team, and there is no settling for less.”

Being from Oregon, I was curious why he chose UO. Lowe gave credit to the unique bond he formed with the coaching staff. “The coaches definitely made me come to Oregon. The relationship I was able to build with each of them, specifically Lanning and Coach Junior Adams (the WR coach), was very special. Not only was it football-oriented, but it was the stuff outside of football that they preached—school, family, connection, etc. There were no other coaches I felt this connection with.”

Lowe also emphasized the team's focus on its core values. "The team goals have honestly been the same. We preach four pillars: connection, growth, toughness, and sacrifice. If we stick to doing those things throughout our preparation, practice, and just throughout the game, we can go the distance."

I asked him to reflect on his first touchdown, starting by describing the moment as surreal. "Words definitely cannot explain the feeling. The crowd was roaring, and I was just so excited to finally get my first one. Really thought about all the progress that has led me to this point. All the injuries I had to overcome, the trials and tribulations I've been through. It felt so surreal, like it was a dream, but having my teammates around me to celebrate it as well was just an amazing feeling."

With their focus on their four pillars and the leadership of Coach Lanning, the Ducks have built a culture of excellence that has carried them through a challenging season. Oregon enters the playoffs with a clear mission: to win it all. Their combination of talent, resilience, and a commitment to growth has the Ducks dreaming of a national championship. If they continue to execute at a high level, Oregon may very well bring the trophy back to Eugene, marking a huge achievement in the college's football history.