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SUMMARY: Phil Knight announces that Oregon will name its new \$200 million basketball facility after his late son, who died at 34

'Matthew Knight Arena'

Approval is given by UO faculty panel

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Phil Knight, the University of Oregon megadonor of few words, made a rare appearance Saturday in Portland to announce that the Ducks' planned basketball arena will be named for his late son, Matthew.

In brief remarks to a crowd of boosters, reporters, TV cameras and the UO men's basketball team, Knight praised Oregon administrators and remembered Matthew as a sports fan who gave of himself.

"Matt was not a child of great accomplishment," said Phil Knight, his voice steady. "He never graduated from college. But he seemed to be finding a niche in charitable work."

Matthew Knight died in 2004 at 34 in a scuba diving accident in El Salvador, where he was working to raise funds to upgrade an orphanage.

"He liked to rebel, never in a bad way --he was never into drugs and booze, which we were grateful for, and he always had the best of friends --but he didn't really like authority that much, and he had a particular way of tweaking the nose of his father," Knight said.

"He inherited his father's love for sports but if his father rooted for Georgetown, he made sure he rooted for Connecticut. If his father rooted for Duke, he made sure he rooted for North Carolina.

"But that line stopped at the University of Oregon. He loved Oregon sports. And indeed in the last five years of his life, he went to more

Oregon games than I did, which is saying a lot. I know that he would look on this with particular pride."

Knight, the billionaire and former UO runner who co-founded Nike, has given more than \$200 million to his alma mater. Though he has spoken in public occasionally, including at a Portland hotel in 2005 to accept a UO business school award, it is rare.

Dave Williford, who has worked as a UO sports spokesman for more than two decades, could not recall one other occasion on which Knight spoke publicly in connection with UO athletics.

Even in August 2007, when he and his wife Penny pledged a \$100 million athletic department endowment to jump-start the \$200 million arena project, Knight did not appear at the news conference announcing the gift even though it was the largest in university history.

UO president Dave Frohnmayer, who wore an Oregon letterman-style jacket Saturday, and UO athletic director Pat Kilkenny spoke before Knight did. Frohnmayer said that a faculty advisory council approved the name "Matthew Knight Arena."

"The ultimate tribute in naming, in our eyes, was obviously the gift by Leland and Jane Stanford to the great university named after their son, Leland junior," said Knight, who has a graduate degree in business from Stanford. "This is by no means at that level. This is just a small slice of an already existing university. A university that, I must say, over the last 15 years of the leadership of the previous speaker (Dave Frohnmayer) has really gotten better qualitative in every way.

"A lot is made in the media about its athletics but it's also its music program, its education program, its business school, its law school, and right on down the line across the board, it's become better in every way."

"We're proud to be associated in this way with this, and we hope that the Matthew Knight Arena will be something that's warm and vibrant for many decades to come."

Phil and Penny Knight have another son, Travis, who works for Laika Inc., the Portland film studio owned by his father.

After Knight's 21/2 minutes of comments, the crowd gave him an ovation. He then took questions, the first from golfer and UO alumnus Peter Jacobsen.

"So we're gonna go from Mac Court to Matt Court?" Jacobsen said, referring to McArthur Court.

"You bet," Knight said.

Knight answered a few more questions, about Matthew's charitable interests (the orphanage) and favorite UO sports (football and basketball). Then Susie Pape, widow of longtime Oregon booster Randy Pape, whose company, The Pape Group, sponsors the annual basketball tournament at the Rose Garden that took place Saturday, thanked Knight for all he had done for the university. Randy Pape died last month.

Knight thanked her as the crowd applauded. Moments later, he left the room through a side door.

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