

# MASCOT

## FSU's Renegade takes fans, football game all in stride

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Ah, such is fame. With not a whisper of a whinny nor nary a neigh, he took all the oohs and ahs from the two-legged types all in stride.

More than 50 fans Saturday night surrounded what passes for a stable underneath the north end-zone of Doak Campbell Stadium. But the object of all the adulation simply looked on with disinterest as he chomped on hay.

"We give you Renegade, half of the mascot team for the Florida State University Seminoles.

Well, actually, his real name is Blue Moon Rise; Renegade is just his stage name.

But to the 46,200-or-so fans at Saturday night's game watching the ap-

paloosa horse carry Chief Osceola to midfield to plant a flaming spear, Renegade by any other name is simply horsefeathers.

The 12-year-old former veteran rodeo star is quite a ham, the folks who handle him say.

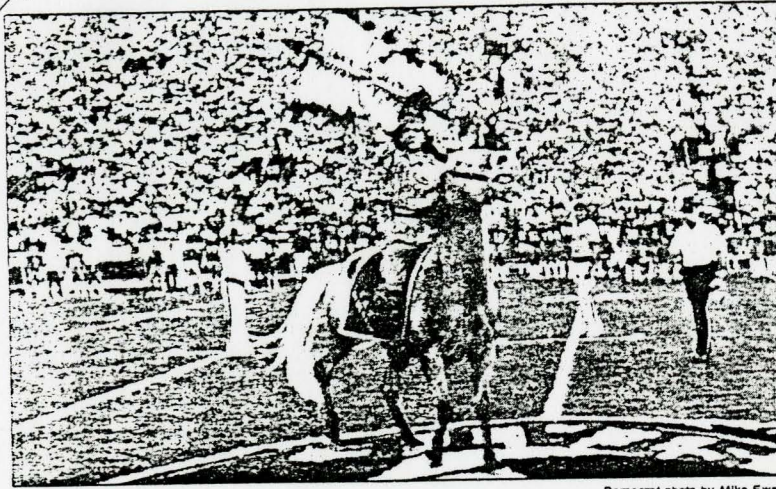
"He doesn't get excited about anything until just before game time," the horse's owner Bill Durham said. "He's thoroughly convinced he's the star."

"He's got built-in spirit," Chief Osceola — FSU senior Jeff Ereckson — added, "a real showoff."

As Ereckson, planning to enter law school soon, spoke, the FSU band trooped by with every note straining.

His meal interrupted, Renegade was paced around in a small circle by handler Steve Mork.

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Democrat photo by Mike Ewan

Jeff Ereckson (Chief Osceola) and Renegade help open football season

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It's all part of getting ready for the show, Mork assured. "It pumps him up a bit."

Meanwhile, Ereckson was getting dressed for the show.

As Durham, a 1965 FSU graduate who now works as a financial analyst, applied Ereckson's make-up, he said he tries to keep everything authentic: The wardrobe was handmade by Seminole Indians who took the design from Osceola's own clothes.

"We've tried to promote the Indian tradition," Durham said, adding he is part Indian himself. "We want people to know that the Seminoles were a great people."

Explaining that the tribe was made of "runaway people," Durham said the familiar typecast of Seminoles paddling canoes doesn't clash with the mascot version.

"Absolutely not," he said. "The majority of them were Creeks and the Creeks were the greatest horse riders."

Durham talks with some pride and that may be due to the effort he made

**'He's thoroughly convinced he's the star.'**

**— Bill Durham, Renegade's owner**

to get Renegade and company simply on the trail. As an FSU student, he first had the mascot idea, but nobody would listen to him, he said.

But when Coach Bobby Bowden came to Seminoleland in the late 1970s, Durham said he found a sympathetic ear and in 1978 the show hit the turf.

The first Renegade lasted only a year before succumbing to a spinal lesion, Renegade's veterinarian, Dr. John Freeland, said.

The following year, ol' Blue Moon made its debut and it's been on the warpath ever since.

And the bi-peds — who don't even get a wooden nickel for their effort — are more than willing to pamper their ward. Handler Mork and his wife, Kathy, were up Saturday morning to give Renegade its scrubdown. During the

week, Ereckson and his brother, Greg, ride Renegade.

Another member of the group that works with the Seminoles' mascot is dentist Dr. Herb Mantooh who hand-makes the spears.

All the work and time that goes into preparing for a game is worth it, Jeff Ereckson said. A back-up rider until this year, Ereckson said he felt nervous before his Saturday debut.

"I had trouble sleeping last night," he said. "It's not every day you have 56,000 peoples' eyes on you."

But, he added, he's working with a pro. "He and I have gotten to be real good buddies," he said. "I know how to handle him now and he knows how to handle me. When I first started, I was a little bit intimidated, but hey, this guy's a star."

Shaking hands with friends and posing for pictures, Ereckson shrugged off the new role. His teammate, however has seen it all before.

With a look of professional boredom in his eyes, he hit the hay again. That's showbiz. You know, the roar of the crowd and the smell of . . .