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Some answers for the Ducks

CALL IT A BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY. Or call it liquid agony.

It involved sitting in the stands of the Oregon-Washington game, watching in the persistent downpour as the Ducks self-destructed before my very eyes.

Sportswriters don't often get the chance to sit in the stands and watch — not work — a football game. I thought it might be fun to just take in the party atmosphere of college football.

After rainwater filtered through eight layers of clothing, I think I'll stick with the warm, cozy press box from now on.

THE FANS I HUDDLED WITH Saturday had different opinions on what's the matter with Oregon. After reading what the experts thought of the Ducks' demise, it was interesting to hear what the real fans thought. A sampler follows.

"Get Lusk out of there!!"

That wasn't the problem against the Huskies, nor has it been all season long. True, he did make a key mental error when the Ducks were called for delay of game on the Husky one-foot line, but it wasn't a fatal mistake.

Up to this point, Lusk has performed adequately: His injured knee has withstood four bruising games, his passing has been at times excellent, and his enthusiasm and zeal for the game refreshing.

"What's the matter with that defense?!"

To answer that question, absolutely nothing. Not only do the Ducks have the best set of linebackers in the Pac-10 north of USC, they boast an All-American candidate in the backfield in Steve Brown, and experience everywhere else.

Long before the season started, Oregon coach Rich Brooks proclaimed his defense as the strength of his ballclub, and he's right. The defense has given up just 59 points over four games, while the offense has managed but 63 — over half coming in its only win.

We want Mrs. Brooks!

If the Ducks were in some rabid college football town, there might actually be rumblings about the kind of job Brooks has done this year. Thankfully, this isn't Norman, Oklahoma or Columbus, Ohio, and there isn't a chance of that happening.

Fans — and sportswriters — always second-guess and gripe about the way a team is being handled. But they don't know everything a coach does — or could they hope to for that matter.

Brooks knows more about the strengths and weaknesses of his team than anybody else. He's the expert, let him do it his way.

THEN IF IT'S NOT ANY of the above, what is it?

You could blame it on the offensive line that hasn't opened the holes for Reggie Brown or protected Kevin Lusk. Brown, the bruiser that he is, has made his yardage largely on his own, and Lusk was sacked seven times against the Huskies.

To their credit, injuries have finished starters Stu Yatsko, Scott Shepard and Jeff Kubitz for the year, and it's now up to their understudies.

But just maybe it could be that the Ducks are just not that good. Sure, they've come a long ways from the 2-9 years, but they're not ready for talk of a Duck dynasty.

They've strung together two winning seasons mainly on emotion and intelligence. In addition, they've lulled some good teams to sleep and beat them when they weren't looking.

Now, those teams they upset are out to get revenge — Washington, for example.

And those teams like Fresno State can make their whole season with a win over Oregon. It's easy to build up emotions when you're the underdog.

The Ducks may have to get used to doing that again.

Ducks

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zone with 13:04 remaining in the half to give the Huskies a 7-0 lead.

Oregon put its only points on

the board when Jolijmour kicked a 26-yard field goal. The Ducks had a chance to put the ball in the end zone, driving to

the Washington 9 yard stripe from the Oregon 21, before the drive faltered with two passes falling incomplete in the end zone.

The Ducks have a bye this weekend, giving them two weeks to prepare for the Arizona State Sun Devils and allowing time for Reggie Brown, the Oregon tailback, to mend a sore right thigh.

The rest of the Ducks might also cherish the time to lick the wounds that only last year they had inflicted on these same Washington Huskies in a 34-10 win.

"We have to regroup," Lusk told reporters. "People might think the Ducks will be down, but that won't happen," he said. "We will be back."

Enjoy a Beaburger while you watch ESPN on our Big screen



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