

From high school to hot seat

Dana Hill fights to resurrect a dormant offense

By Debbie Howlett
Of the Emerald

It could've been dream-time, but the stuff young freshmen dream about, the stuff legends are made of — didn't come off.

The scenario called for the freshman to come in for his first start in college and immediately pick-up a profoundly poor offense. Tough work for seniors — tougher for Dana Hill.

However, the debut of the rabbit uick freshman was not a nightmare. "He showed some guts out there," quoth head coach Rich Brooks. In fact, Hill showed enough to get a second shot.

Hill took the starting quarterback job away from senior Kevin Lusk one game into the 1982 season after Lusk led a dismal offense to only three points in four quarters. The time was right for Hill to work some magic by picking these dismal Ducks up and dusting them off.

But Hill only seems to have stirred the dust up a bit. Against San Jose State, he was only a little more effective than Lusk was against Arizona State. The offense did not put any points on the board (the defense and special teams hit for 13) but Hill did manage to spearhead a few sustained drives, even though the Ducks managed to squelch them with turnovers.

Hill came into the game with the ball on the Ducks' 22

yard-line and dumped the first pass toward the sidelines with San Jose State pressuring him from behind. The second play, San Jose sacks Hill for a two-yard loss. On third and 12, Hill fumbles a ball, a few people boot it around, and when the dust cleared San Jose had a safety.

So much for dream-time.

But Hill, just three months out of Garey High School, got progressively better. The Ducks weren't humbled with a 31 point loss — it was only five — and the defense didn't seem to let down, if anything, this Duck team looked like it got progressively better. Toward the end of the game there were even a few flashes from the Ducks of old — Steve Brown's punt return for a touchdown was one flash.

Some of the flashy past was also in Hill's footwork when the defense pressure got hot.

It is Hill's footwork and speed, as well as his size, that have invited a few comparisons of the rookie with the last permanent quarterback of record, Reggie Ogburn.

As a junior, Ogburn passed for 905 yards and six touchdowns, he ran the ball for 831 yards and five touchdowns. Most running backs in the Pac-10 would have gladly taken Ogburn's rushing stats, same goes for the quarterbacking stats. Another thing about the Ogburn years is that the Ducks won games.

Hill and Ogburn are phy-

sically comparable. Both are relatively small (5'10") quarterbacks, and at 180 pounds neither Hill nor Ogburn wouldn't press fear into too many defensive linemen's hearts. But like Ogburn, the man who's at the Ducks' helm sure can run.

In Hill's debut against the Spartans, he carried the ball more times than any other Duck (20) for 57 total yards, but sacks and fumbles did the freshman in. Of the 57 yards he gained, only 16 were left after counting out yards lost. On the other hand, Hill had all of the Ducks' 23 aerial yards against a secondary that an NFL scout at the game termed "the best on the west coast."

"I hoped Dana would play better than he did," said Brooks after the San Jose contest. "But other than some things he could have executed better technically, he showed some guts out there and did a number of good things."

"If things had gone better for us in other areas, it might have made Dana look better."

But Brooks isn't counting Hill out. With an outstanding high school career (Hill rushed for over 1,000 yards his senior year) and just one major college game under his belt, Hill got the nod to go in the Fresno State game last Saturday.

On Tuesday — with just two days between Hill and the Spartans of San Jose — Brooks had his mind made up. "We'll go with Dana again



Photo by David Corey

Dana Hill passed for 23 yards against a secondary one NFL scout calls "the best on the west coast."

because he can make things happen."

With an offense held to a measly four points in its first two games, Hill has his work

cut out for him.

And Duck fans might just be pinching themselves to make sure it isn't all a dream before the season's over.

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