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mike riplinger

bobbles, indecision and losses

It's almost a given that most school newspapers blast their own team for not winning — especially a 0-6-1 squad. This publication has taken its shots in years past, but it's difficult to be a good muckraker after watching the Oregon football team this season.

The Ducks aren't that bad.

Certainly they're not a 0-6-1 team. A 0-6-1 team doesn't lead the then, No. 1-ranked team in the nation, the Washington Huskies, until late in the fourth quarter. Or have a win sewed up over Notre Dame until a field goal ties them with 11 seconds left in the game. Or stay with UCLA, who has been in the top

ten most of the season, much of the game before faltering at the end.

But a 0-6-1 team does get destroyed like Oregon did against USC 38-7 the week after it played well against Washington, and it does let a close game turn into a complete rout like Oregon did in losing to UCLA 40-12.

But why?

Turnovers. And what causes the turnovers? A constantly changing backfield.

Last year the Ducks were saddled with injuries that all but wiped out the offensive line. The quarterbacks were not much better staying off the casualty list, and the result was a dreadful 2-9 season.

This year, Oregon has again been hit with the injury bug. It's caused coach Rich Brooks to do exactly what he said he didn't want to — have a lineup that changes from week to week.

With the number of injuries the Ducks have had, they've been forced to keep putting in new faces in the backfield. Inexperience often results in turnovers, and that's the one thing the Ducks have been good at. They've turned the ball over 32 times — 16 fumbles and 16 interceptions. The only team that is even close is Washington State with 25.

The quarterback problem has never been solved, and that has to be a big reason for the

number of turnovers.

Mike Jorgensen has the starting job, but he has yet to play a whole game without being taken out because of an injury. He is listed as doubtful for Saturday's game.

Brooks has used Dana Hill, Kevin Lusk and Edmund Rivera, along with Jorgensen, all at different times this year. And often, they are substituted for each other during a game, if the quarterback of the moment makes a mistake, or Brooks wants a passer instead of a runner.

Having the threat of instant ejection hanging over their heads, none of the Duck QBs can feel too secure, and their play has shown it.

Having a new leader, as the quarterback is ultimately supposed to be, every few series can't help the execution of the offense, or for that matter, the morale of the rest of the team.

Saturday the Ducks will meet a team in Washington State, that can't make up its mind either, which quarterback should be their starter. The Cougars interchange Clete Casper and Ricky Turner at QB, but Turner has seen the majority of the playing time of late.

Washington State has also had about the same amount of luck in the loss column. The Cougar's record is 1-6-1.

It should be an interesting game, to say the least.

Team refuses insignia

SWARTHMORE, Pa. (AP) — The undefeated Swarthmore College football team, angered by a review of athletics at the school, refuses to wear the college insignia on its helmets.

"I told them, it's your prerogative," said Coach Jim Lapinski. "You want to do it, it's fine with me."

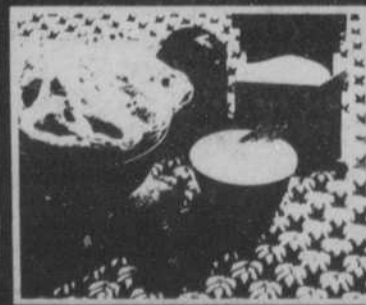
What Lapinski called "a very long, very complicated, very complex story," concerns the attitude by a vocal minority at

the suburban Philadelphia college that a winning football team tarnishes the school's reputation for academic excellence.

Some people were so incensed by the team's victories last year that a committee of students and faculty opened an investigation of athletics at Swarthmore, a study the football team felt was directed toward it.

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