

Oregon's offense, defense switch roles

It seems the problems for Oregon football coach Rich Brooks are never-ending.

Last fall, his senior-dominated defense was unyielding, holding six opponents to less than two touchdowns and finishing sixth in the Pacific-10 Conference in overall defense.

His offense, however, fired nothing but blanks all year. They managed a meager eight touchdowns on the year, and ended up finishing last in scoring, passing, third-down conversions, first downs, and total offense.

This year, Brooks has eight of his starters back on offense, but he has to field a defense decimated by graduation.

"Any time you lose the number of players we did, you have to be concerned," says Brooks of his defensive unit. "We graduated some very good football players and we have some holes to fill."

Oregon will anchor its defense around seniors Steve Baack and Jeff Williams, the fifth and sixth leading tacklers on the team last fall.

Baack, who has earned a touch of pre-season recognition, totaled 93 tackles from his left defensive end spot last year and had eight quarterback sacks. Williams, Oregon's starting free safety, had 91 tackles and eight pass deflections last fall. He will have help in the defensive backfield from two players who played a lot last year, but rarely in the limelight.

After spending most of the year as a relief defensive back, sophomore Doug Judge finally earned a starting role in the final five games. The strong safety finished the year with 56 tackles, and with his 6-2, 215-pound size, sup-

ports well against the run.

One of the cornerback positions will be manned by junior Wendell Cason, who was the fifth defensive back when Oregon went into its pass prevent "nickel defense" in 1982. Although he only had 54 tackles last year, Cason came up with 10 tackles in Oregon's season opener against Pacific.

The linebacking corps is extremely young this year, with a freshman and two sophomores starting.

Baack will be joined on the defensive line by senior tackle Dan Ralph, who started five games last year. He had six tackles and the Ducks' lone quarterback sack against Pacific.

"We are very young on defense," says Brooks. "My major concern on defense is gaining experience and developing quality depth."

Brooks' concerns may not be as major as he thinks, if Oregon's first two games are any indication. Against Pacific, the Ducks lost on the scoreboard 21-15 but Oregon's defense held Pacific to only 236 yards, including a meager 95 on the ground.

And against then-sixth ranked Ohio State two weeks ago, the Duck defense held the Buckeyes to below their 1982 season average of 425 yards per game.

On offense, the Ducks appeared to sputter in their season opener against Pacific, as they could come up with only 15 points. But appearances can be deceiving if you only look at scoreboards.

Oregon's game total of 312 yards was a higher offensive production than in any of the 11 games the Ducks played in last fall. And, Oregon scored more than 15

points only once in 1982, with 21 against Washington.

But the new firepower this year on offense has been marred by a problem that was crippling the Ducks even last year — turnovers. Oregon finished dead last in the Pac-10 in 1982 in turnover differential, giving up 15 more fumbles and interceptions during the year than the number recovered.

This fall, Oregon's two fumbles led to Pacific touchdowns, and against Ohio State the Ducks committed five turnovers.

But while Oregon has had some problems at the skill positions, Brooks has encountered few problems with his offensive line. The Ducks return the entire center of that line — Gary Zimmerman at right guard, Scott Shephard at left guard and Ryan Zinke at center. Zimmerman, a senior, finished second to pre-season all American Tony Slaton of USC in the Pac-10 Skywriters poll of the top offensive lineman in the league.

Zimmerman and his fellow linemen will be blocking for either Mike Jorgensen or Mike Owens at quarterback. The pair waged a back-and-forth battle for the starting slot all through spring and summer practices, with Jorgensen winning the starting nod against Pacific and Ohio State. But he was knocked out of the Pacific game with a bruised knee, and Owens came on to throw for 122 yards and lead the Ducks to their only touchdown of the day.

Whoever hands off, it will usually be to fullback Ladaria Johnson and tailbacks Kevin McCall and Kevin Wilhite. Johnson, who gained 332 yards in 1982 (4.4 yards

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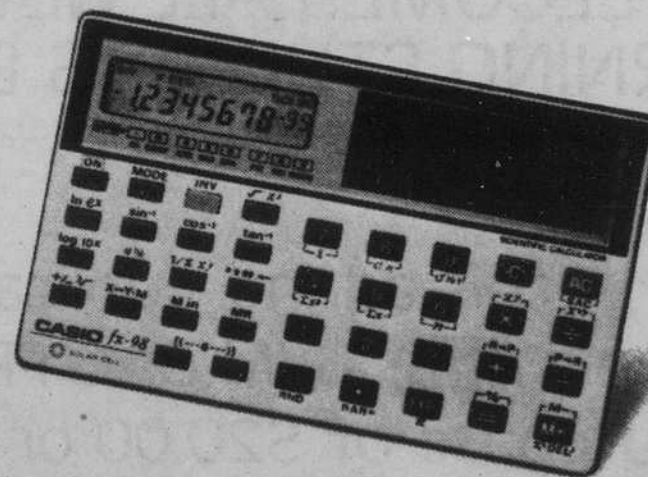
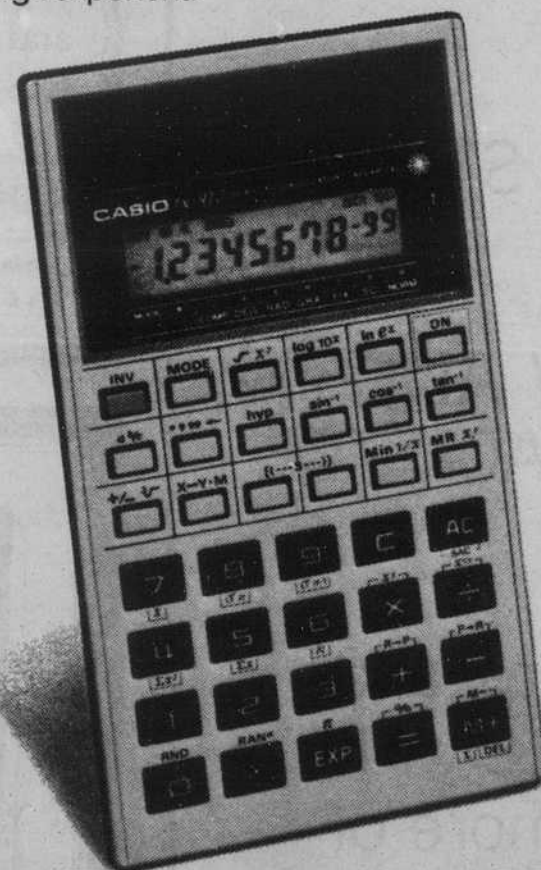
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