

sports

Quarterback raises Oregon to 3-0 mark

By Allan Lazo
Of the Emerald

The time has come to put "winning" back into the Oregon football vocabulary, and sophomore quarterback Chris Miller appears to be just the man for the job.

The jury may still be out on Miller's success, but the evidence so far is strong in his favor:

•Miller replaced starting quarterback Mike Jorgensen in the third quarter of the Long Beach State University season-opener to spark the Ducks' 28-17 victory with a 12 of 17 passing performance for 129 yards.

•Miller won the starting role the next week against the University of Colorado. Against the Buffaloes, Miller directed the Ducks to a 27-20 win with scrambling ability and two touchdown passes to Lew Barnes.

•Miller proved he could play under pressure as he tossed a game-winning 31-yard aerial to Barnes with 53 seconds remaining to catapult the Ducks over the University of California for a 21-14 decision.

•Oregon has won its first three games of the season for the first time since 1965. They also jumped to 1-0 in Pac-10 play.

The reason for this — simply Miller's steady progress as the leader of the Ducks' offensive unit.

"His major strength is that he's got such great athletic ability," said Jorgensen of his cohorts rise to the top.

Miller's athletic prowess is best manifested in the one thing that may prove to be the key to happiness for all — versatility.

"We want to try to throw the ball progressively more each game, but we just want to balance it out so that the running game opens it up for the passing game and vice-versa," Miller said.

While the key to Miller's passing game may not be his arm, his ability to scramble out of trouble or roll-out of the pocket has proven to be a life-saver for the Ducks as evidenced in the all three wins.

"I scramble a lot better, but sometimes I flush out of the pocket when I shouldn't and that's something I've got to get better at," admits the 6-2, 191-pounder.

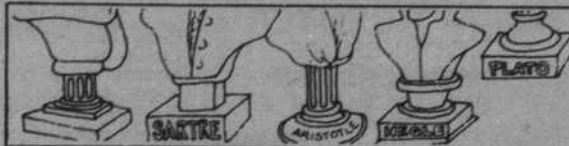
Although Miller has only four starts at the helm, he has played like a senior in many situations. Miller hasn't thrown an interception in 64 pass attempts and has a 57 percent completion mark.

While Miller's scrambling game plays havoc with defenses, the signal caller readily admits Oregon coaches would rather see him throw the ball rather than run in some instances.

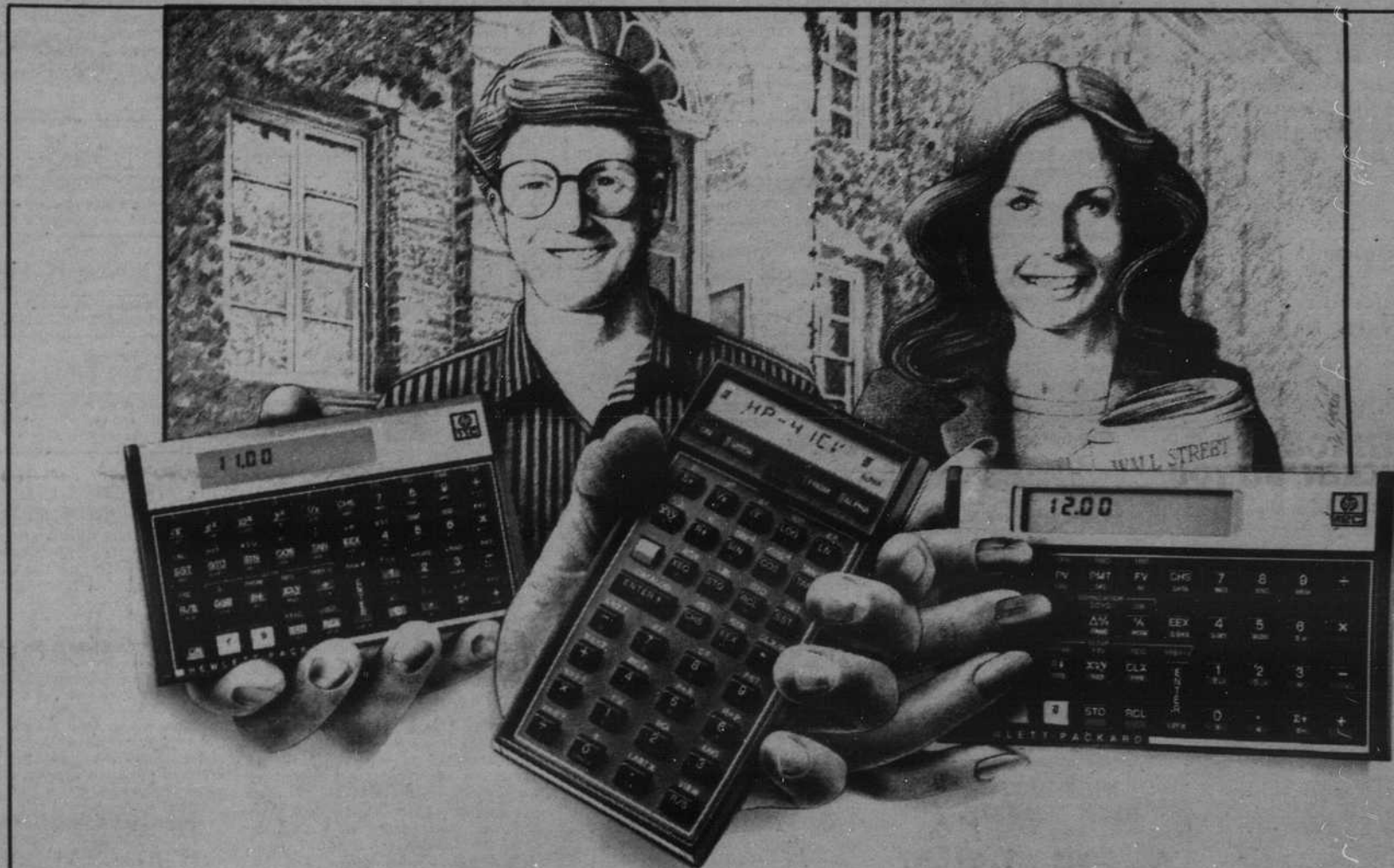
"He still needs a lot of work on a lot of things, but he is a talented young man," praised coach Rich Brooks.



Photo by Richard May
Chris Miller's play is the main reason the Ducks are undefeated this year.



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