

Threesome boosts Ducks' kicking game

By Dennis Kaiser
Of the Emerald

When graduation took kicker Paul Schwabe and punter Kevin Hicks from the Ducks last season, Oregon coach Rich Brooks knew he had some big holes to fill.

Fortunately, Brooks found a trio that has filled those gaps quite nicely.

In fact, the trio of punter Mike Preacher, place-kicker Matt MacLeod and kickoff man Dean Otto have given Oregon a triple-threat kicking attack which has given the Ducks the upperhand against the opposition.

All three have been key contributors in the Ducks' 4-1 start.

Preacher is one of the top punters in the Pac-10 this year with a 44.2 average. MacLeod has given stability to the place-kicking duties by hitting 5 of 7 field goals and 15 extra points. Otto's deep kickoffs have kept the opposition from



Photo by Travis Johnson
Dean Otto

returning the ball most of the time.

It's no wonder why Oregon's kickers have done well, with Oregon coach Rich Brooks, a former professional special teams coach with the Los Angeles Rams and San Francisco 49ers, around with advice.

Preacher, a junior, transferred to Oregon from Cerritos Junior College in California because of Brooks' coaching.

"It's nice to have a coach who knows more about punting than I do because past coaches didn't," says Preacher. "He (Brooks) knows what he's talking about, so if something goes wrong Brooks will let you know."

So far, Preacher hasn't done much wrong in keeping the opposition penned deep in their own territory with his punting expertise. Preacher has a 56-yard punt to his credit, but is capable of hitting deeper ones.

Brooks thinks Preacher could be one of the best in the conference.

"Mike's got a tremendous amount of talent and a great future ahead of him," says Brooks. "He's still not close to his potential because he isn't consistent."

Oregon's other two kickers, MacLeod and Otto, have interesting backgrounds before their arrival on the team.

Both are from foreign countries; MacLeod hails from Vancouver, British Columbia, and Otto is a native of South Africa.

MacLeod, a sophomore, entered school last January upon his father's advice that Oregon would be a good place to get an education. Though MacLeod had never played competitive football, he wanted to try out for the Ducks. Surprisingly, he made the squad after an impressive performance in spring drills. Brooks invited him back for fall and the rest has been history.

The pressures of kicking doesn't bother MacLeod who hit three field goals against the University of the Pacific in the Ducks' 30-14 victory.

"If I make or miss it, I forget about it and go on to the next one," says MacLeod, who has hit some timely field goals for the Ducks this year including a 47-yarder against the University of California.

Meanwhile, Otto's story of kicking for the Ducks is simply a miracle in itself.

Otto was in Eugene visiting relatives this summer when Duck offensive guard Craig Kaylor noticed him kicking a rugby ball at Autzen Stadium. Kaylor suggested he put his foot to work for the Ducks.

Within one week, Otto was admitted to the university and donned the pads for the Ducks. He had never played football before and had only seen five minutes of the Super Bowl.

"I didn't know where to put the things," says Otto of his pads. "I didn't know the rules. I knew nothing of



Photo by Michael Clapp
Mike Preacher

football."

But Otto's kicking ability was more than enough to convince Brooks to let him handle the kickoff chores for the Ducks. Otto's kicks usually end in the end zone without a return.

"I was so nervous before the game," says Otto of initial debut against Long Beach State University. "Not about kicking, but that I would do something wrong — against the rules."

Brooks is glad Otto came in the nick of time.

"He (Otto) came along when we really needed someone," says Brooks. "Dean is a raw talent, and he has the potential to be a good place-kicker. He has the leg to kick long."

Duck fans should see the three kicking Oregon to higher plateaus in the future.



Photo by Travis Johnson
Matt MacLeod

et al.

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ASPAC needs two representatives from ASUO funded programs. Applications available in Suite 4 EMU. Deadline is Wed.

For more information, call ASUO ext. 3724

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ALPHA PHI OMEGA meeting today in Room 108 EMU. Starts at 7:30 p.m.

ASKLEPIAD MEETING TONIGHT hi Psi Fraternity at 7 p.m. Need to organize plans for the year. All members please attend **LANGUAGES OF NICARAGUA**, firsthand

field report by Colette Craig, linguistics dept., 3:30 p.m. in Room 145 Straub

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