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Sports

Civil War tilt to decide best of the rest

By Dennis Fernandes
Of the Emerald

The joke is over, and the Oregon Ducks were the first ones to stop laughing.

The annual Civil War game between Oregon and Oregon State University has traditionally been a lopsided, meaningless affair between two programs ready to vent a season of frustra-

tions on the other. Heck, this game has even been dubbed the "Toilet Bowl."

Not this year.

The 90th meeting of the annual event is set for Saturday at Corvallis' Parker Stadium. Kickoff is scheduled for 1 p.m.

OSU's 10-7 upset victory over 19th-ranked (UPI) Brigham Young University is evidence

that the Beavers, 3-7 overall, have improved tremendously over the season.

Sophomore quarterback Erik Wilhelm, who has baffled defenses all season long, passed 1962 Heisman Trophy winner Terry Baker to become OSU's career passing leader with 3,518 yards.

Holding an offensive powerhouse like BYU to a mere seven points is an amazing feat in itself.

All of these factors have caused Oregon coach Rich Brooks such concern that he has closed practices at Autzen Stadium this week. It is apparent he believes that Oregon's 11-game unbeaten streak in the series is in more jeopardy than previous Civil War touts.

"The emotional aspect of this game comes into play more than any other," Brooks said.

"There's no question we want to win our last game," Brooks said. "The thing I've always stressed is that our seniors are in a position that with a victory they can say they've never lost a Civil War game."

In addition to the Ducks' Civil War success, Brooks has the claim to fame of never losing in 18 matchups as a player and coach for the Beavers and then coach at Oregon.

The winner of this game could finish seventh in the Pacific-10 Conference standings (the top six are all ranked in the top 20), providing that Washington State University loses to the University of Washington.

"With us winning the last two and them beating BYU, it brings a little more meaning and involvement into this football game," Brooks said. "It's possible this game could decide the best of the rest, and that means seventh place, and we'd like to get it."

Weakening schedule or not, the Ducks have displayed considerable improvement on the offensive and defensive ends of the pigskin. Up until the third quarter of last week's game, the defense had not allowed a touchdown in seven quarters. The offense has exploded for 885 yards the past two games, 391 of those on the ground.

Chris Miller, who could feasibly walk out of Parker Stadium with every Oregon passing record in his pocket, will match his aerial show up with an improving Beaver defense, led by cornerback Teddy Johnson, whose nine interceptions this season ties him for the nation's number one spot.

"When there is emotion on the line, you do need somebody with a cool head out there, and normally that's your quarterback. I'll put my stock in Chris Miller," Brooks said.

Derek Loville has emerged as the running threat for the Ducks and is sure to be called on to take the pressure off Miller, especially after last week's career best 139 yards.

"I'm pleased that we could run and pass the ball, and I think that it has helped the passing game a little bit," Brooks said.

Look for Wilhelm to hook up with receiver Dave Montagne the majority of the time. His 10 catches on Saturday catapulted him into the record books as OSU's single-season record holder in receptions.

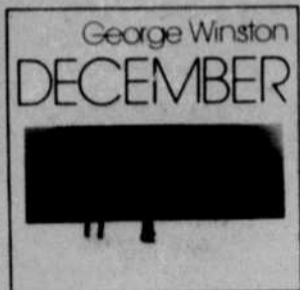
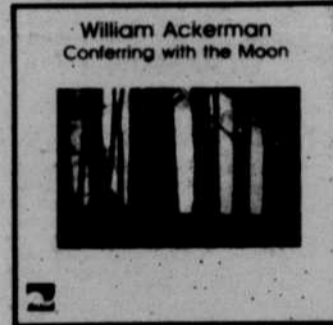
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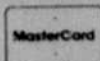
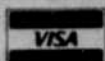
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