

Ducks look at chance to update record book

By Aaron Knox
Emerald Sports Editor

Homecoming Week would not be complete without its traditional centerpiece, the Homecoming football game. But what a difference a year makes.

A year ago Oregon's football team, in the throes of a six-game losing skid, dropped a humbling 41-7 contest to Stanford at Autzen Stadium before a paltry Homecoming crowd of 32,000.

This time around the opponent will be the University of California, in a game with long-term Pacific-10 Conference implications. The Webfoot grid-ders find themselves flying high in the thick of the conference and post-season bowl races, with an anticipated audience of 37,000 to 40,000 for the game.

The last of the 6,000 tickets set aside for free student admissions were snapped up two

weeks ago. The last time an Oregon football team won more than six games in a season was way back in 1964. Lyndon Johnson was President, Mark Hatfield was governor of Oregon and co-chairman of the Republican National Convention that nominated Barry Goldwater to challenge Johnson for the presidency. Len Casanova, nearing the end of his 16-year tenure as Oregon coach, guided the team to a 7-2-1 mark after finishing 8-3 the year before.

The 1987 Ducks have posted a 5-2 record against seven 1986 bowl-game participants, and earlier this season defeated Washington and USC in the same year for the first time since 1970. Dating to the last three games of 1986, the Ducks have won eight of their last 10 games.

An impressive win Saturday would give the Ducks a two-game win streak and revive the momentum which was thwarted Oct. 10 in Los Angeles, when ninth-ranked UCLA converted seven Duck turnovers into a 41-10 romp. It also would equal the most victories by an Oregon team under Brooks, with three games remaining on the schedule.

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weeks ago.

The upstart Ducks (5-2, 3-1 in the Pac-10) will be strong favorites against Cal (2-4-1, 1-2-1) on Saturday. Kickoff is scheduled for 1 p.m.

Other traditions have faded with time and changing social climates, but there is something enduring and sacrosanct about a football game that transcends ordinary influence.

The Homecoming game has continued and prospered through civil rights and anti-war protestations, perhaps because it allows fans to develop passions and loyalties toward an activity that ultimately is meaningless. What better way to spend a Saturday afternoon than to root, root, root for the home team?

This year more than ever the game against the Golden Bears will have some meaning. It will have a direct bearing on the Ducks' prospects for post-season play, which is a subject long alien to Oregon football fans. For the first time in a long, long time, the game has significance beyond its role in the Homecoming celebration.

That importance can be measured by the total lack of student tickets available for the contest. According to Athletic Director Bill Byrne, the last of the free student tickets to Saturday's game were distributed Oct. 9, just before the Ducks' debacle at UCLA.

Such has not always been the case. Previous Homecoming games have, by and large, been exercises in futility during seasons of the same. You have to go clear back to 1980 to find the last time Oregon won its annual Homecoming bash.

That season, with quarter-back Reggie Ogburn at the con-



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