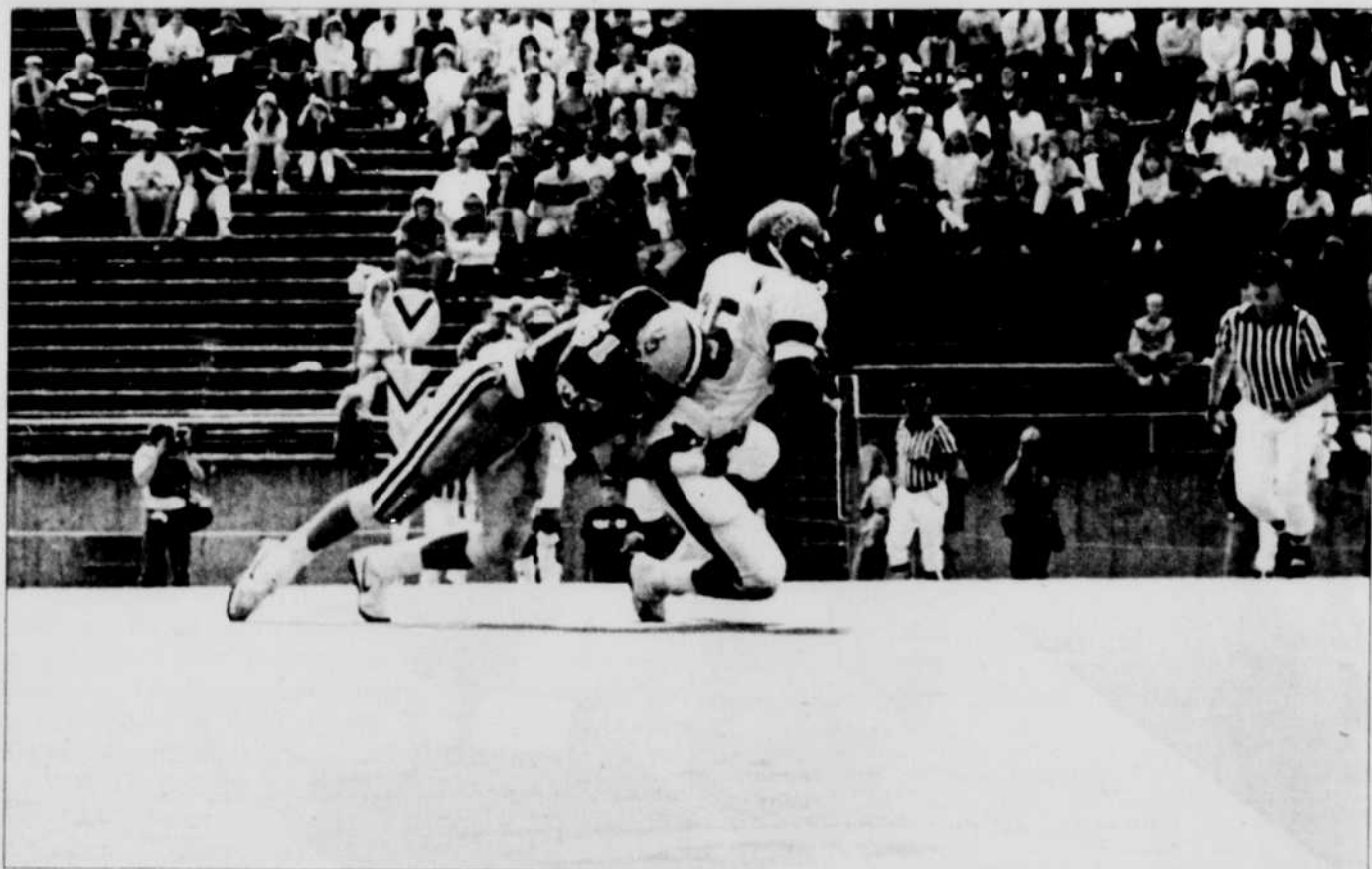




Tom Talbot helps keep points off the board. . .

Nathan Welker

touchdown with less than two minutes left. San Diego State mounted one last drive, but fate smiled on the Ducks, and Oregon survived 25-20.

Then the the big one arrived. Washington. The rivalry that has outgrown the rivalry with Oregon State (because Oregon always routs OSU) took on added vigor.

The Ducks outplayed the Huskies again this year, but this time emerged with a win, to complement their performance, 29-22. Once again, the Ducks had opportunities to let fans rest easy with a big second half lead, but maximum excitement prevailed again. Oregon needed an end-zone interception in the closing seconds to secure the victory. For students, it was "Up the establishment, and down with the goalposts." For Huskies' quarterback Chris Chandler, the game represented a serious setback in his pursuit of a Heisman Trophy.

A mere week later, everyone's favorite fowl were at it again. The mallard magic continued as the Ducks dominated the University of Southern

California Trojans throughout the first half, building a 21-0 lead. But fear not, the Ducks proved once again why Duck football is the most excitement for your entertainment dollar, as another end-zone interception was required to save the game. Final score: 34-27. The Ducks vaulted up to number 16 in the Associated Press poll; for a week the smell of roses filled the air on campus.

At the same time fans were asking for scores, tickets, and directions to Pasadena. Southern California newspapers were asking how Eugene was going to prepare for trips to the Rose Bowl. And booster clubs around the nation were rejoicing for "their Ducks."

Of course, the Ducks then ran into UCLA, and forgot to hold onto the ball. Along with the slippery football, hopes for the Rose Bowl slipped through Oregon's fingers. Still, Oregon's defense kept the game close until midway through the fourth quarter, when the Bruins' depth closed the game out.

Yet, if UCLA were to lose to another team down the road, the Ducks still had a shot at the Rose Bowl, provided they win the rest of their games. Last week, however, the Ducks squandered opportunity after opportunity until time ran out, and the Stanford Cardinal escaped with a 13-10 upset victory.

What began as a schedule with eight bowl teams from last year, may wind up as a schedule with only five actual bowl teams this year. Colorado, San Diego State, and Stanford, all opponents who made bowl appearances last year, have faltered. These teams are not expected to spend Christmas break playing football. The Ducks have improved their level of play from last year, but most of the teams on their schedule have not made similar gains.

Kiss the schedulemaker again. After the two mistake-prone road games, Oregon comes home this weekend to face California, a team that hasn't arrived performance wise--yet. Last year, during the Homecoming game, Oregon and its alumni took a