

# Defense pulls apart the wishbone

## Cusano leads with takeaway

By Ashley Conklin  
Emerald Sports Reporter

It would be hard to justify not naming Oregon nose tackle David Cusano the Pacific-10's Defensive Player of the Week upon review of his performance in the Ducks 16-10 win over Arizona on Saturday.

Cusano was all over the Autzen Stadium turf, playing a leading role in shutting down the potent Wildcat wishbone, and stifling explosive quarterback Ronald Veal.

Cusano registered 14 tackles on the day, had two tackles for losses and a quarterback sack. However, his biggest play of the game might have occurred on the Wildcats' first possession.

With Oregon leading 3-0, Veal tried to set up a screen pass over the right side on second-and-eight. Cusano, "reading screen all the way" stepped in front of the pass at the Arizona 26-yard line and returned the interception to the eight, setting the Ducks up for a touchdown three plays later and a 10-0 cushion.

"I read screen, and I can't tell you much more than that," Cusano said. "God just set it in my hands. I just wanted to keep running."

After the collapse at Stanford the week before, it looked like Oregon might be set up for another heartbreaker this time, as the Duck offense was again ineffective in the second half. Cusano and the rest of the defense were determined though to avoid a repeat performance.

"I took it (last week) real personal," Cusano said. "We played with a lot of emotion and played for 60 minutes. We came out fired up."

Cusano and the rest of the defense held the Wildcats in check all afternoon. The same team that pushed and shoved the Ducks around last year in a 41-27 victory, gained only 161

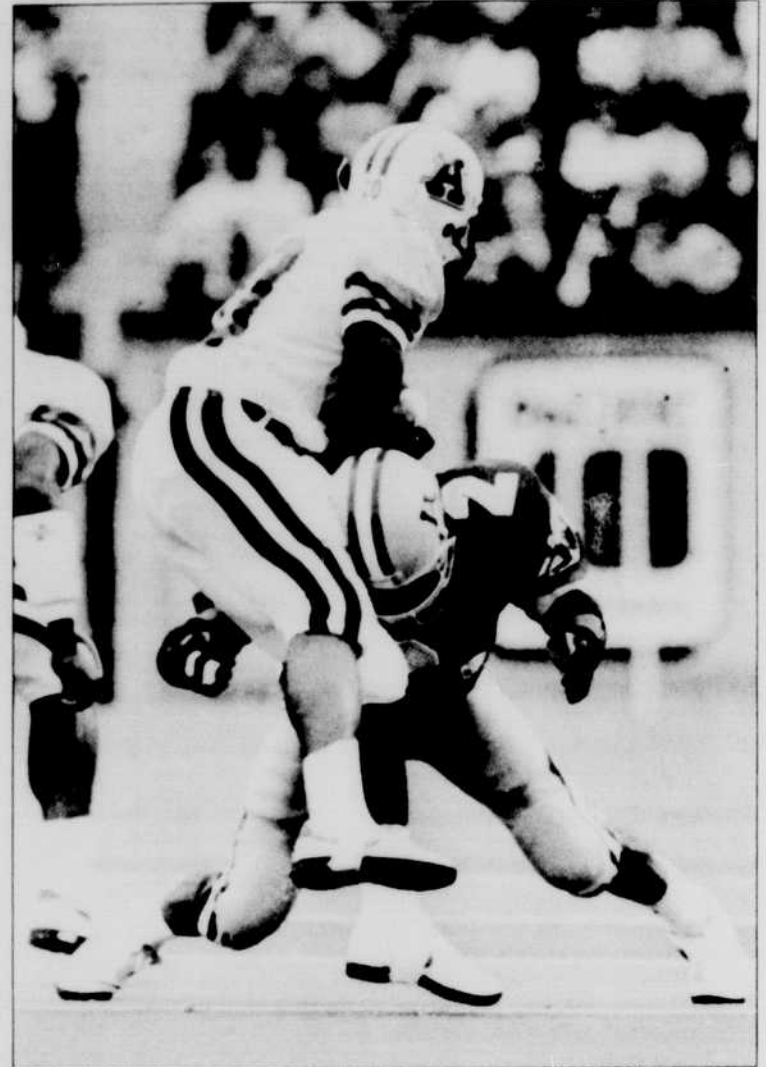


Photo by Bill Haines

While the front line played tough all day, Oregon's secondary also stuffed the Arizona Wildcats, as witnessed by this hit from senior cornerback Chris Oldham.

yards of total offense and rushed for a meager 3.2 yards per carry.

Cusano said it was "definitely a team win on our side of the ball," and he was right.

Defensive ends Matt LaBounty and Andre Williams were tough against the run and pressured Veal into a miserable three completions in 16 attempts through the air.

Inside linebackers Joe Farwell and Mark Kearns were outstanding clogging the run, and strong safety Rory Dairy again showed how tough he is coming up and stuffing the run.

Kearns, "the glue that holds us together," according to defensive coordinator Denny Schuler, recorded a game-high 15 tackles even though there were questions during the week that he might not play because of an ankle injury.

The Ducks will face another tough opponent this week when the high-flying Washington State passing attack comes to Autzen providing "about as big a contrast as there is," Kearns said, to Arizona.

Cusano, for one, was glad he didn't have to worry about the wishbone anymore.

"Thank god we're done with it."

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