

Scoring shootout lacks defense

By Don Peters
Emerald Columnist

Shootout at the UO Corral.

Games rarely live up to their billing, but Saturday's Oregon-Washington St. contest did. The second-largest crowd in history showed up at Autzen Stadium, expecting a high-scoring, shoot-em-up blowout.

They weren't disappointed.

This wasn't a game. It was an offensive exhibition. Both defenses collectively decided to take the day off.

All told, 91 total points. Ten touchdowns, in nearly every possible combination. Run, pass, blocked punt, run back on an interception. Almost a kickoff return. Six field goals.

There have been basketball games where the Cougars haven't scored 51 points. Come to think of it, there have probably been a few basketball games where the Ducks didn't score 38.

WSU had 503 yards total offense. Oregon had 402. Cougar running back Steve Broussard had 205 yards and three touchdowns. Bill Musgrave threw for a career-best 347 yards and two touchdowns.

Everybody cheer DE-FENSE(less).

The Oregon defensive squad, which looked like the Wall of Stone last week against Arizona, looked more like the Wall of Styrofoam on Saturday. There hasn't been this much shredding since the days of Ollie North, Fawn Hall and the Iran-Contra affair.

Sad fact is Oregon was beaten by a better team. No excuses, like at Stanford. No single point on which the game turned. No breakdown on which the loss can be blamed. WSU is just a good team.

The Cougars ran the ball well, and when Oregon keyed on Broussard, they passed the ball to one of their perpetually open wide receivers. They didn't punt the ball until the

fourth quarter, and then only once.

However, Oregon's loss doesn't

rest completely on the defense's shoulder. The offense, or lack of it, had something to do with it too. The defense — via a Chris Oldham interception — put the ball on the Cougar 6. Three plays. Oregon couldn't punch it in, and the Ducks settled for a field goal.

Oregon did score 38 points. They had the opportunity to score a lot more.

The first half was slow-moving, with a lot of offense but minimal scoring. WSU had a 20-6 lead going into the locker room.

In the second half, things got interesting. The Autzen scoreboard lit up like a pinball machine. There were 25 points scored in the third quarter, and an incredible 38 points scored in the fourth.

Three times Oregon made a rush at the Cougars, getting to within 20-16, 27-24 and 34-31. Each time, WSU came right back to put the score out of reach.

The Cougars, the preseason pick to be the cellar-dweller in the Pac-10, looked like a bona-fide Rose Bowl team Saturday.

Oregon, on the other hand, is probably out of the Rose Bowl hunt in what is probably the toughest conference in the country. However, there are still several other bowl games to go to. A 3-2 record doesn't exactly signal the end of a season, but it will be an uphill struggle.

The rest of the schedule is a curious mix, with "easy" home games against Long Beach State and Oregon State, and tough road games against Washington, BYU and UCLA.

Don't look for the Ducks to go into a complete and utter collapse. It ain't over yet.

Don Peters



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