

SPORTS

Ducks meet UW again in long-standing rivalry

By Robert Weber
Emerald Sports Reporter

It's "Husky Week" in Eugene this week, and Joe Reitzug couldn't be happier.

Reitzug and his Duck teammates will clash with the "Purple Haze" defense of Washington this Saturday afternoon in Husky Stadium in what looks to be the biggest game in this 90-year-old rivalry.

Reitzug, the Ducks' 5-foot-10 split end, is a fifth-year senior from the Seattle area who feels that the rivalry between the Ducks and Huskies has, in recent years, become as important, if not more important,

than the Civil War rivalry with Oregon State.

"The Oregon State game is a huge game in-state," Reitzug said, "but it isn't looked upon with much importance nationally. Against Washington, we have an opportunity to beat a team that has done a lot of things."

Oregon Coach Rich Brooks stressed the importance of the natural rivalry with Oregon State but was quick to note the magnitude of this weekend's game.

"I don't think there's any game that's more important than your natural rivalry year in and year out," he said. "But, obviously this game is the most important game we're going to play this year. If we want to be in

the Rose Bowl race it's a must win."

The 19th-ranked Ducks enter the contest against the 17th-ranked Huskies with a 4-1 overall record, but are just 0-1 in the Pacific-10 Conference. Washington also sports a 4-1 mark but is 2-0 in conference play after shocking USC 31-0 at home and manhandling Arizona State in Tempe, 42-14.

This weekend's game is a do-or-die situation for the Ducks' Rose Bowl hopes. It also provides another chance for the Ducks to prove that the Huskies aren't the only team in the Pacific Northwest that can play

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Oregon would not only like to make amends for last year, but past disappointments also, including not having been to the Rose Bowl since 1958.

The 19th-ranked Ducks are 0-1 in Pac-10 play while the 17th-ranked Huskies are 2-0 after impressive victories over USC and Arizona State. A win would put Oregon back into the Rose Bowl race, but a loss, Brooks said, all but ends the Ducks' chances of being there.

"This game is the most important we're going to play this year in the fact that if we want to be in the Rose Bowl race it's a must win," Brooks said.

"You can take natural rivals, national champions, whatever, we would love to go to the Rose Bowl," he said. "Whether that's realistic or not, I don't know but if we're going to have any chance, we have to win this football game."

To have a realistic chance of winning Saturday, the Oregon offense must move the ball against the stingy Husky defense.

Oregon is ranked 10th in the nation in total offense (467.4 yards per game) and sixth in scoring offense (39.6 points per game) while Washington is first in rushing defense (55.6 yards per game), eighth in total defense (255.4 yards a game) and 13th in scoring defense (13

points per contest).

The Huskies showed their strength in a 31-0 rout of USC in Seattle and their defense has Brooks more than a little concerned.

"The Washington defense is very good at containing the quarterback No. 1 and No. 2, they shed blockers extremely well," he said, "and rush the passer extremely well."

If the Ducks can't get the running attack going with fullback Ngalu Kelemeni and tailback Sean Burwell, it could be a long afternoon for Musgrave and the offense.

"There tough enough when you're trying to run it, but if they know you can't run it, poor Musgrave will be in for a

long day," Brooks said.

If the Washington defense wasn't enough for Brooks to worry about, there's the Husky offense to consider.

Tailback Greg Lewis is seventh in the nation in rushing and leads the Pac-10 with 644 yards in five games. Quarterback Mark Brunell also presents a tremendous threat both running and passing.

"Greg Lewis is clearly an outstanding back," Brooks said. "He's the best back at Washington since I've been coaching here."

"Brunell adds, what I would say, a totally different dimension to the Washington offense than I've ever seen before," he added.

Beating Washington in Seattle would be a huge accomplishment for the Ducks, an accomplishment split end Joe Reitzug, a Tacoma native, says could lead to other accomplishments for the Ducks.

"The game this week is the biggest game we've ever been in," Reitzug said. "BYU, two weeks ago, was the biggest game but this puts us in a position to achieve some goals we've set for ourselves."

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