Defense shuts down Cardinal offense in win

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Editor

Oregon's defense pitched its first shutout since 1988 Saturday, whipping the Stanford Cardinal 31-0 at Autzen Stadium.

On a day of big plays from the offense and special teams, the defense had its most dominating game of the year as the Ducks improved to 2-2 in Pacific-10 Conference play and 6-2 overall.

It was the first shutout of an Oregon opponent since the 1988 season-opener when the Ducks pounded Long Beach State 49-0. And other than Civil War rival Oregon State, it was Oregon's first shutout of a Pac-10 Conference foe since 1973.

"The defense played super football," Oregon Coach Rich Brooks said. "They controlled the football game. I believe Stanford wanted to come out and establish the running game. We did not let that happen."

Led by inside linebacker Joe Farwell and free safety Eric Castle, the defense made sure Stanford would go nowhere on the ground.

Farwell helped clog the middle with 13 tackles when the Cardinal tried to establish its power running game of Tommy Vardell and Jon Volpe. Castle, along with cornerback Daryl Singleton, had a big hand in shutting down all-purpose threat Glyn Milburn on both running and passing plays.

Castle had 16 tackles and Singleton, linebacker James Bautista and cornerback Devon Hosey all had interceptions on the day. Hosey returned his 76 yards for a touchdown.

"In the third quarter we wanted to get the shutout and did everything we could to get it," Farwell said.

"The defense really pulled together," Castle said. "Anytime we get a shutout, that's a great feeling for the defense."

"It doesn't get much better than this does it?" asked defensive coordinator Denny Schuler. "This has to rank up there with the Arizona game last year (a 16-10 win) and the Stanford game two years ago (a 7-3 win) as one of the best games we've played since I've been here."

The offense did it's part, too, with Sean Burwell rushing for a career-high 144 yards, including a 75-yard touchdown jaunt, and Bill Musgrave throwing a 33-yard touchdown pass to fullback Ngalu Kelemeni.

But it was the defense that stood out on this day, shutting down the leading passing team in the conference.

Milburn had come into the game second in the nation in all-purpose yards with more than 200 per game but was completely controlled by Oregon, as were quarterbacks Jason Palumbis and John Lynch with the three interceptions and only 197 yards through the air.

"I didn't think it would be possible to get a shutout when you look at their players and look at the points they've scored against the caliber of teams they've played," Schuler said. "This is not a Big Sky team with Big Sky talent."

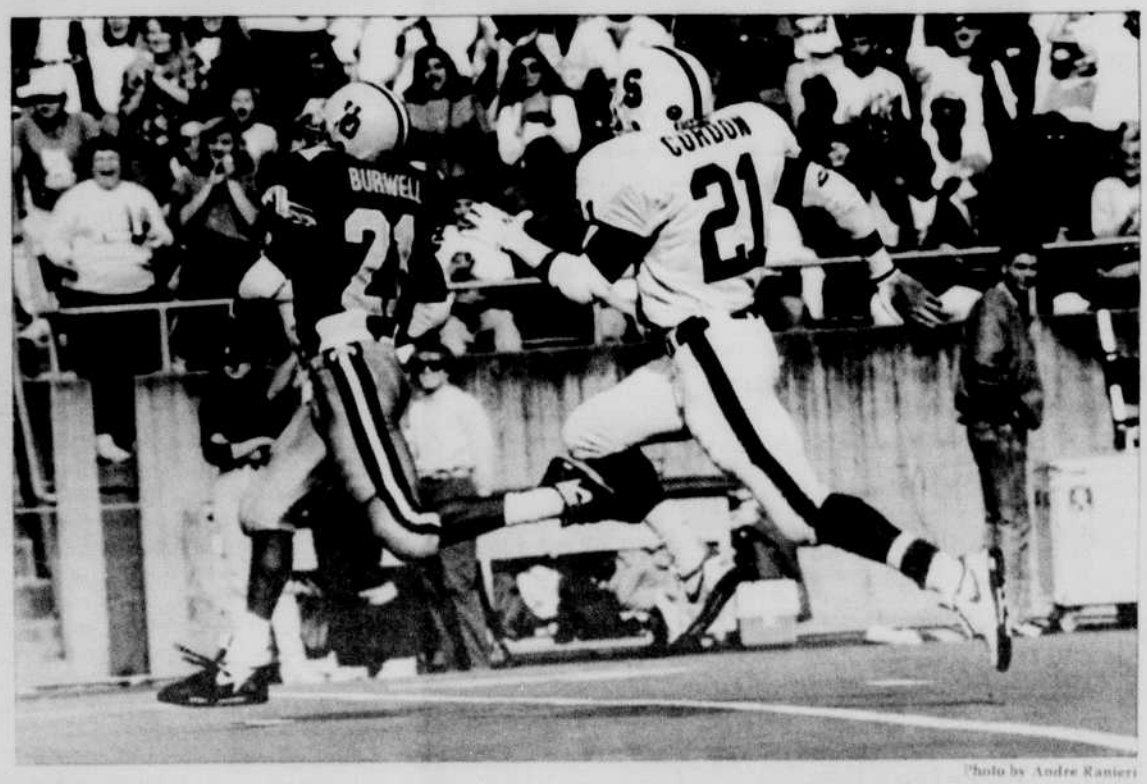


Photo by Andre Ranieri

Sean Burwell outran everyone, including Stanford cornerback Darrien Gordon, on this 75-yard scamper in the second quarter.

The Duck offense sputtered after Musgrave's touchdown pass on the first drive, but it didn't matter because the Oregon defense took control.

The Ducks used the same defensive game plan to stop the Cardinal as they did against Brigham Young earlier this season.

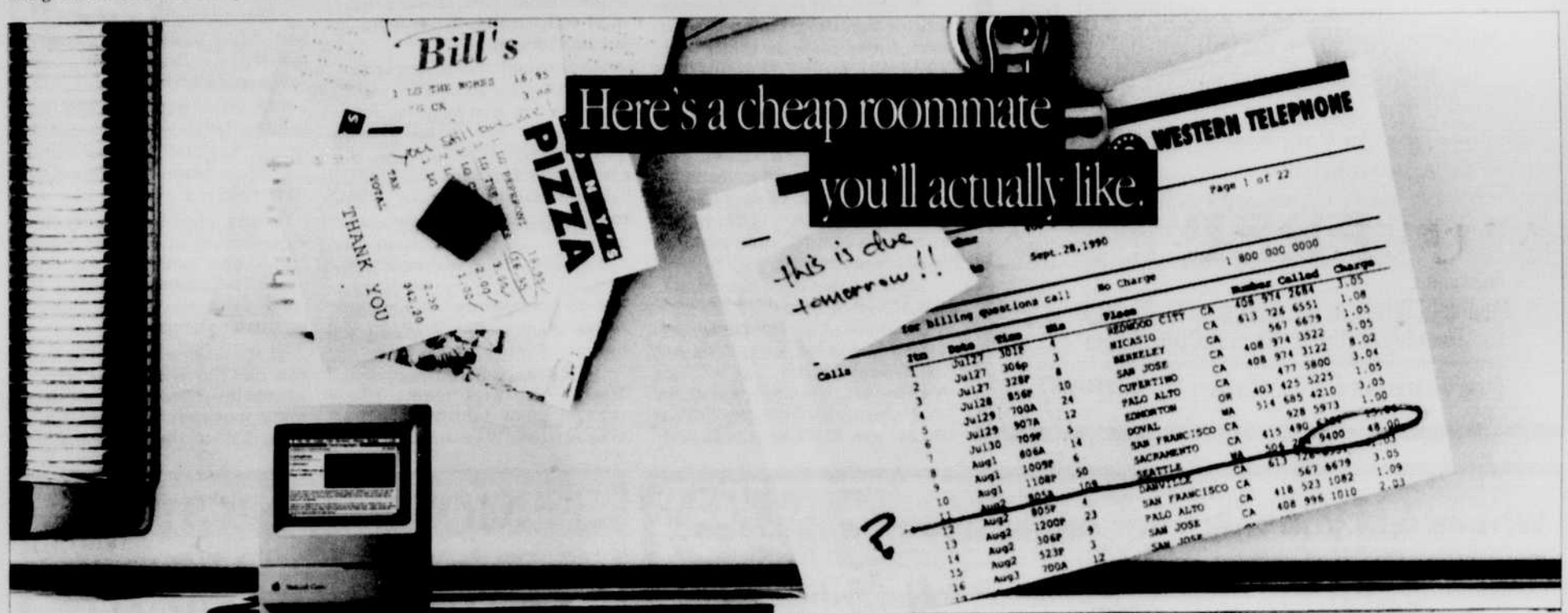
The plan, Schuler said, was to control Palumbis, Milburn and the rest by mixing up man-to-man coverage in the regular defense and then using zones and bracket coverage on Milburn and split end Ed McCaffrey when the Ducks went to their five and six defensive back packages.

Oregon finally got the offense going again midway through the second quarter when Burwell sprinted 75 yards on a draw play to give the Ducks a 14-0 lead.

Stanford was able to stop the Oregon running game early on with an eight-man front, but the Ducks caught the Cardinal on a blitz on Burwell's long-run as tackle Todd Kaanapu threw the key block to spring Burwell.

Late in the second quarter, with Palumbis leading the Cardinal down the field, Hosey stepped in front of a Palumbis pass and went the distance for a touchdown.

The Ducks put the game away early in the third quarter with 10 more points, letting the defense do the rest.



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