

Reitzug model of consistency at wide receiver

Small-framed senior able to make big plays with acrobatic catches

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Editor

Few people can stretch a 5-foot-10, 170-pound body to the limit like Joe Reitzug can.

As Oregon's starting senior split end, Reitzug has earned a reputation for stretching his body to catch anything thrown to him. In his three years at Oregon, Reitzug has caught passes deep in the end zone, on the corner of the sideline or over the middle.

It seems like any pass quarterback Bill Musgrave has thrown in his direction, Reitzug has caught by twisting his body in some way or another. His small frame even withstands a punishing hit from a defensive back.

It's a trait that has set Reitzug apart from other receivers throughout the Pacific-10 Conference.

"His ability to make the clutch catch, the difficult catch, the acrobatic catch, has been well chronicled over the last three years," Oregon Coach Rich Brooks said. "He can get hammered over the middle and still hang on to the ball."

The competitive nature in Reitzug is a big reason for his ability to make the tough catch, wide receivers coach John Ramsdell said.

"I think it's his competitive

spirit in that it's an upper-echelon competitive spirit," Ramsdell said. "He goes up there for balls, and when he goes up there he comes down with it."

Two touchdown catches in Reitzug's career particularly stand out as ones few other receivers could have made.

In last season's opener against California, Musgrave lofted a ball deep into the end zone where Reitzug leaped amid two Golden Bear defenders, caught it and dragged one foot down for the touchdown.

Two weeks ago it was a little different as Reitzug was wide-open in the end zone against Arizona State, but he had to stretch as far as a 70-inch body would allow to catch Musgrave's touchdown toss.

Reitzug has made a living making those types of catches, and after three years of putting himself to the limit, he knows what it takes to be a key weapon in one of the nation's highest powered offenses.

"I think it's just a matter of positioning," Reitzug said. "I just try to make it clear to the officials that I got one foot in. It's (also) a matter of concentration because when seeing the ball, you have to do it and not be distracted."

Although Reitzug has made it a habit of catching anything Musgrave throws to him, nei-



Photo by Sean Poston

Wide receiver Joe Reitzug has overcome injuries to teammates and himself to help power the Duck offense.

ther Reitzug nor Ramsdell believes the senior quarterback looks to him just because of his ability to make the tough catch.

"I don't see him back there picking and choosing," Reitzug said. "All great quarterbacks do the things that are best for the team."

With Oregon having plenty

of other receiving weapons such as tailback Sean Burwell, fullback Ngalu Kelemen and tight end Jeff Thomason, Ramsdell said it's not a case where Musgrave zeroes in on just one receiver.

"Those other guys give us a lot of firepower, and certainly Joe is a part of that," Ramsdell

said. "He's a dependable guy that makes the clutch play that helps the offense move the ball. Bill's going to throw for the open receiver and take whatever the defense gives him."

Reitzug has also stretched himself to the limit in other

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