



Linebackers James Bautista and Joe Farwell have played key roles in making the Oregon defense one of the best in the Pacific-10 Conference.

Photo by Sean Poston

Inside linebackers have Duck defense playing in top form

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Editor

Joe Farwell looks more like a running back than a linebacker at 6-foot-2, 210 pounds.

James Bautista, on the other hand, has the prototype linebacker size at 6-1, 232 pounds.

Farwell and Bautista might not look much alike size-wise, but their similar play as Oregon's two inside linebackers has been a big reason for Oregon's success on the football field this season.

It was supposed to be a year of rebuilding for the Duck defense after such stars as David Cusano, Mark Kearns and Chris Oldham graduated. It's actually been a year where the defense might be having a better year than it did a year ago.

"I think we've played better

as a unit this year," Farwell said. "Last year we had so many seniors on the unit and this year we have only two or three seniors."

"Last year I was the only freshman out there and I was staring back at all seniors out there," he said. "We're all a lot closer in age (this year) and know each other a lot better and are a lot better friends, and that makes a difference."

Oregon started the season at 2-0 and although the Ducks hadn't given up many points, both San Diego State and Idaho had moved the ball on the Oregon defense and there was some question just how good the defense would be.

But the Ducks answered those questions with superlative defensive performances against both Arizona and Brigham Young.

Although Oregon lost to Arizona, the defense did its part in shutting down the explosive triple-option Wildcat wishbone as both Bautista and Farwell had big games.

The next week, the Duck defense held down Brigham Young, the nation's highest-powered offense at the time, to minus 47 yards rushing and completely took the Cougars out of their game.

The two games were a huge test for the defense, but when the Ducks passed the test, it set the tone for the rest of the season.

"I think teams really wanted to test us out," Bautista said. "We had to prove we could

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