

SPORTS

Casanova looks back on history of Civil War

Former coach will see his 41st

By Erick Studenicka
Emerald Contributor

There may be a handful of people who have witnessed more Civil War games than Len Casanova, but surely few have been more directly involved in as many Oregon-Oregon State football games than the former Duck head football coach and athletic director.

In hopes of catching a glimpse into the history and tradition surrounding the Civil War, the *Emerald* caught up with "Cas" in his comfortable office at the athletic center that bears his name, where he works there as the athletic director emeritus.

Casanova seemed excited about the upcoming Civil War on Saturday at Autzen Stadium, which he said would make his 41st in a row.

ODE: What game stands out in your mind as being the most memorable?

Casanova: Personally, I remember the 1955 game as being the most satisfying. The week before the Civil War, we had been routed by Stanford 44-7. Everyone was calling for my head. The students even hung me in effigy.

Oregon State had a great team that year, and it was predicted we would be blown out. We came out and stomped them 28-0. They didn't even complete one pass. After the game, the students were saying I was a hero. Things really changed in the course of one week that year.

ODE: Has a controversial play ever determined the Civil War winner?

Casanova: In 1957, the season when we went to the Rose Bowl, we found ourselves trailing 10-7 in the second half. Our running back, Jim Shanley, broke into the end zone but fumbled after crossing the plane of the goal.

Nowadays, the referees would rule the play a touchdown, but in those days, it was a fumble. So instead of scoring, we turned the ball over. We didn't score again and lost 10-7, which is something many people don't remember about our Rose Bowl year.

ODE: Has there ever been one outstanding play in the Civil War similar to the famous play Cal made against Stanford in 1982?

Casanova: Well, I don't remember any play quite like the Cal-Stanford play, but one play stands out in my mind because (current Oregon coach) Rich Brooks always brings it up.

We had scored late in the game and needed a two-point conversion. Everyone expected us to run up the middle, but instead we gave the ball to Cleveland Jones on the reverse. Jones was only 5-foot-5 and 140 pounds, but he ran into the end zone untouched as we had fooled the entire Oregon State team.

Brooks was playing on the Beaver defense at the time, and he still talks about "that damn reverse" that gave us a 14-14 tie.

ODE: What individual Civil War performance stands out in your mind?



'I think there is a big difference in the atmosphere surrounding the game itself. ... I don't think students are quite as excited about the (Civil War) today.'

— Len Casanova

Casanova: Probably everyone would think I would single out someone like Mel Renfro or Terry Baker, but in my mind, the most outstanding performance I saw in a Civil War was by Phil McHugh in the 1955 game. Oregon State was running a single wing offense and McHugh was playing defensive tackle. He singlehandedly stopped everything the Beavers tried and dominated the line of scrimmage. We shut the Beavers out 28-0 and finished 6-4 for the year.

ODE: Has inclement weather ever played a role in the Civil War outcome?

Casanova: In one of my first years as coach, 1953, we were playing at Hayward Field. It was windy and snowy; we had to scrape off the field to see the lines. Neither team could do anything because of the conditions. Oregon State scored the only touchdown of the game on a Duck turnover and that was all of the scoring as we lost 7-0.

ODE: What was your most disappointing Civil War loss?

Casanova: I don't think I will ever forget the disappointment of the 1962 game. I knew before the game that if we won, we would be asked to the Bluebonnet Bowl, but I chose not to tell the players before the game. At halftime, we were leading 17-7, and I thought I would motivate the players by telling them about our bowl invitation.

I don't know what happened, because instead of getting excited about the bowl game and playing better, they fell apart in the second half and lost 20-17. There went our bowl bid.

I don't think I've ever been in as quiet of a locker room as I was after that game.

ODE: What are some of the differences you've noticed be-

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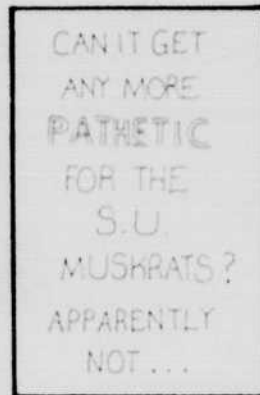
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