

# ASU backs hope to plug hole left by Bates

By Steve Mims  
Emerald Sports Reporter

In only a month and a half, the Arizona State running back picture has gone from cloudy to outstanding and is now questionable at best.

When the Sun Devils opened fall camp, the coaching staff knew it had three capable backs, but none had asserted themselves as the starter. George Montgomery, Mario Bates and Jerone Davison were set to fight it out for the starting tailback position in the head coach Bruce Snyder's offense.

Tailback is the key position for Snyder, the former running back coach for the Los Angeles Rams when Eric Dickerson was running wild in the NFL. During his five years at California, his offense was run-oriented with Heisman Trophy candidate Russell White leading the way. Snyder's first major task when he went to Tempe was to find a tailback to fit his system.

He did. Bates, a 6-foot-2, 207-pound sophomore from Tucson, got the starting nod and never looked back. After the Sun Devils' first three games, Bates was third in the country in rushing with 441 yards and was being talked about as a Heisman candidate.

Then in the closing minutes of Arizona State's 45-24 loss to Nebraska, disaster struck. Bates went down and with him he took the hopes of many Sun Devil fans. Bates was diagnosed to have a second-degree tear of his medial collateral ligament and a third-degree tear of his anterior cruciate ligament. He is out for the year, and Snyder must once again search for a tailback to lead his offense.

"We lost the best running back in the country," said Arizona State running back coach Hue Jackson, who is apparently living



**Jerone Davison**

in a Marshall Faulk world. "He is a franchise player. Fortunately he has not redshirted yet, so we will try to make him a medical redshirt this season."

Davison and Montgomery battled for the spot, and Davison will get the start this Saturday when the Sun Devils come to Eugene to face the Ducks. Davison, a 6-foot-1, 235-pound senior, is hearing opportunity knocking, and he said he is ready to answer the challenge.

"I have a lot of confidence," Davison said. "I've carried the ball often this year, so I don't feel any different. I will basically play the same role as before except that I will be starting."

Davison said he did not think Bates' injury was serious at first, but now that he knows it is, he said he must take more responsibility.

"Now that I have found out it is serious, I figure I have to step up and play more," Davison said.

Davison's road to Tempe has not been a smooth one, but he now has the chance to make it all worth while. The 22-year-old played his first season for Arizona State last year after transferring from Solano Community College in Fairfield, Calif., where



**George Montgomery**

he set school records and received numerous honors.

Davison was twice selected as an All-American by *JC Grid Wire* after rushing for more than 2,700 yards in two seasons for Solano. He averaged 7.7 yards on 353 carries and led the conference in total offense both seasons.

After transferring to Arizona State, Davison struggled during his first season, gaining only 263 yards on 73 carries. He gained a season-high 61 yards on 14 carries and scored a touchdown against Washington. Despite the lack of success, Davison is confident that he will be ready on Saturday.

"When the offensive line does their job, I can do mine," Davison said.

Jackson says he believes Davison is ready for the challenge and he does not believe there will be much change in the Sun Devil offense without Bates.

"I don't expect any change in the offense," Jackson said. "Jerone has played before, so he knows the system. I don't expect any dropoff at all. Jerone is a combination back; he has speed, quickness and power."

If Davison does struggle against the Ducks, look for Montgomery

to get plenty of action. The 6-foot-2, 210-pound junior has shown flashes of brilliance during his embattled career at Arizona State, but Snyder won't hesitate to play him against the Ducks.

Montgomery led the Sun Devils in rushing last season with 475 yards despite missing four games because of injury. He rushed for a career-high 134 yards against USC in 1991 as well as 128 yards against Washington State.

No matter who is carrying the ball for the Sun Devils, Jackson has no doubts the Sun Devils will be able to run the Sun Devils.

"Jerone and George are both real good football players," Jackson said. "Jerone has been a starter for us before, so we feel comfortable with him. I don't expect any change in the offense."

Davison and Montgomery have combined for only 193 yards this season in back-up duty, but Saturday will be their first chance to be the feature back.

Oregon's rushing defense has gotten mixed reviews this season, but it has played well lately. The Ducks have given up only 49 yards rushing in the last two games against Texas Tech and UNLV, but they allowed up 488 in the season's first two games. The Jekyll and Hyde defense appears to be on the upswing and it has Jackson and Davison worried.

"The Oregon defense is very talented and physical," Jackson said. "We expect a rough, tough game. I just hope we come away with no injuries this time."

"Oregon has a really aggressive defense," Davison said. "They have a lot of guys flying around the field."

All compliments aside, Davison and Montgomery both know this is their chance to show Snyder what they can do, and if either falters, it may be a while before they see game time again.

## Brooks joins AD ranks

By Dave Charbonneau  
Emerald Sports Editor

Rich Brooks is now officially the Director of Athletics for the University.

On Thursday, Brooks took over the position from former athletic director Bill Byrne, who is leaving Oregon to take the position at Nebraska.

Brooks is also the head football coach for the Ducks and is in his 16th year as the Oregon coach.

Byrne will leave the University after serving eight years as Director of Athletics. He was named as Nebraska's athletic director this summer and will take over on Nov. 1 for current Nebraska AD, Bob Devaney.

During his tenure at Oregon, Byrne played a vital role in the building of the Casanova Center, as well as the renovation of Hayward Field and the addition of skyboxes to Autzen Stadium.

But Byrne is most proud of the reputation Oregon gained while he was at the University.

"I think we gained some genuine statewide support for the University," he said.

A lot of that support could be attributed to Brooks' football program, which appeared in back-to-back bowl games in 1989 and 1990.

Brooks will be one of only three athletic directors in the country who also coaches a Division I team.

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