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FOOTBALL

Do Ducks schedule cupcake foes?

By Erick Studenicka
Emerald Sports Reporter

While Oregon was dismantling UNLV 59-6 last Saturday, Pacific-10 Conference rival Arizona nearly pulled off the upset of the season, losing 8-7 to first-ranked Miami.

The previous week, while the Ducks were hosting Texas Tech, Northwest rival Washington was playing national power Nebraska at home.

Could it be possible that Oregon is 'ducking' the national collegiate football powers in hopes of gaining a few easy non-conference wins? Wouldn't Oregon's athletic budget woes be improved if the Ducks could play a Miami or Nebraska in front of a sold-out Autzen Stadium, rather than the 30,000 fans the Ducks have been drawing for recent games?

The answers to these questions, as with most concerned with big-time collegiate athletics, boils down to economics (with some scheduling logistics and unforeseen circumstances thrown in for good measure.)

"We schedule football games several years in advance," said Oregon Sports Information Director Steve Hellyer. "What we try to do is schedule a home and away series with quality teams, such as a Big 10 or Southwest Conference school."

With games scheduled years in advance - up until the year 2000 as of now - there is little Oregon can do about the quality of its opponent in any given year. For example, when Ore-

gon plays at Ohio State on Sept. 13, 1997, the Buckeyes could very well be the No. 1 team in the country, or they could be Big-10 also-rans. The point being, there is no way to predict the quality of an opponent years into the future.

But why is it that teams like Notre Dame, Miami, and Michigan never seem to come to Eugene?

"We don't have a big enough stadium to be able to guarantee them the amount of money it would take to get them to travel out for a game," said Rich Brooks, Oregon's head football coach and athletic director. "Washington is able to get a team like Nebraska out here because they have a 71,000-seat stadium and can generate the necessary funds."

Because of the high guarantees required by the national contenders, it can be more profitable for the Ducks to draw fewer people to a game against a less-popular opponent who requires a smaller guarantee.

But why do teams like Utah, Fullerton State, New Mexico State and other schools of lesser quality always seem to show up on Oregon's schedule?

"What we try to do when we plan our non-conference games is to schedule one outstanding team, one quality team, and one lesser team," Brooks said. "We already have to play eight Pac-10 games each season, which means we have a difficult schedule to begin with, as the Pac-10 is probably the toughest conference in the country."

Brooks said that he felt Ore-

gon's non-conference opponents this season had fallen into his predisposed categories, with Texas Tech being an outstanding team, Hawaii a quality team, and UNLV a lesser quality team. UNLV, it should be noted, was not on the Ducks' original 1992 schedule, as Long Beach State was the original opponent until the 49ers dropped their program last year.

"Look what has happened," Brooks said. "Some felt that Hawaii was not a strong team to have on the schedule, but they're 3-0 now and in many polls." Hawaii has risen this week to No. 7 in the *New York Times* computer football poll, verifying Brooks' opinion of the Rainbows being a "quality" team.

Brooks also pointed out that Arizona and Washington also had their "soft" opponents along with their games against national powers. Arizona has Utah State and New Mexico State on their non-conference schedule, and Washington will play Pacific, one of the worst Division I teams in the nation.

And if you can't wait until 1997 for Oregon's game against Ohio State, what other interesting non-conference games can fans look forward to in the interim?

There is the home game against Iowa Sept. 24, 1994, and on Sept. 9, 1995, Oregon will play Illinois. But if you can't get tickets to those games, there should be plenty of room at Autzen on Sept. 21, 1996.

That's when Fullerton State will be back in town.

EDWARDS

Continued from Page 5B

And what is Edward's vision of a great game?
"I'd like to be more consistent," he said. "I've played pretty consistent this year, but I want to play a perfect game. Not miss any assignments, make great hits, and just do what I'm supposed to do play after play."

Edwards is following in the footsteps of many great linebackers that have come out of Oregon. But Edwards said he, and fellow outside linebacker Ernest Jones, are too busy carving out their own niche to worry about who came before them.

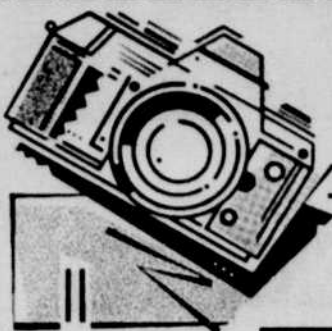
"Andy Conner, Pete Brantley ... those guys were great, but I think Ernest and I are starting a new

tradition of what a linebacker's supposed to be," he said. "We're trying to build our own reputations."

Edwards nearly lost the opportunity to earn that reputation when he was suspended from the team - missing Oregon's opener this year - because he wasn't getting the job done in the classroom.

"That helped me realize that school is where I wanted to be," he said. "When you lose something you like, you get a reality check. It bothered me not being able to play in the first game of the season, but that was my own fault."

Edwards learned his lesson the hard way, but thanks to that "reality check," he's still smiling.



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