

Husky QBs try to adjust to James' 'starter's shuffle'

By Don Peters
Emerald Freelance Editor

Don James has one of those problems other coaches dream about.

The Washington football coach has two quarterbacks, both NFL-draft caliber. Each was the MVP in the Rose Bowl. Both want to start.

"They both want to do well, they both want to play, and they both want to win," James said.

Decisions, decisions.

Two years ago, there was no doubt who was Washington's quarterback. As a sophomore, Mark Brunell guided the Huskies to their first Pacific-10 Conference title in 10 years and was a star in Washington's 46-34 Rose Bowl victory over Iowa.

But in the 1991 spring football drills, Brunell tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee — a brutal injury that forced Brunell to the sidelines until the third game of the season.

Enter Billy Joe Hobert.

As a redshirt freshman, Hobert had been Brunell's little-used backup during the 1990 season, throwing just six times in three regular-season games. But when Brunell went down, Hobert became the starting quarterback.

What followed was a Husky dream season. Behind Hobert, Washington went 12-0 and garnered co-national champion honors with Miami. Brunell was relegated to a backup roll, but onlookers were curious to see how James was going to deal

with a successful Hobert and a healthy Brunell.

Hobert kept the starter's job coming out of spring drills, but James said he would give Brunell substantial playing time. It became a pattern: Hobert starting with Brunell playing the second quarter. Usually, Hobert came back in to finish the game.

So far, the plan has worked. Washington is 5-0 and No. 1 in one poll, second to Miami in another.

"We've done what we said we would do: The backup would play the second quarter, and we would reevaluate at halftime," James said. "(We have) two quarterbacks who are very good, two quarterbacks who are very equal, all through practice and all through games."

"It's difficult for (Hobert) and I sharing time," Brunell said. "Two years ago, I was the starter. I think I'm a better quarterback now."

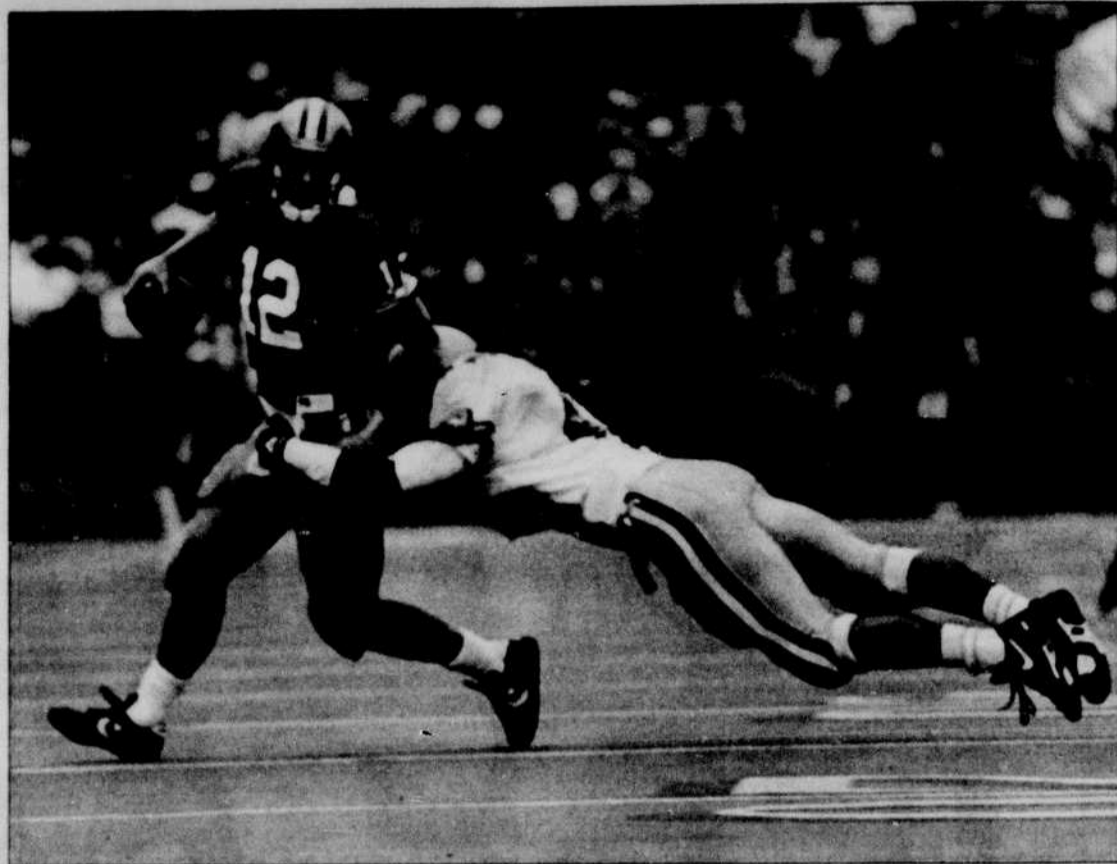
It's a situation ripe for turmoil. A quarterback controversy can tear a team apart, especially if the participants begin to complain.

"Both players have been fine," James said. "They've got good attitudes."

Perhaps at game time, but Hobert complained to the press last week about sharing the quarterback chores with Brunell.

Saturday against Oregon, Hobert will have the same problem, but this time it will be him watching as the other guy takes the opening snaps.

Last week against California, Hobert was ineffective against the



Billy Joe Hobert is undefeated as a starter, including this win last year over Oregon in Seattle, but he won't be the first Husky quarterback on the field Saturday against the Ducks.

Golden Bears' defense, completing just three of 12 passes for a paltry 36 yards. Washington, coming off a 17-10 squeaker against USC, was tied at halftime 7-7 and in danger of blowing its 19-game winning streak.

Hobert started the second half, but James put Brunell in midway through the third quarter. The

result was an eight-play, 64-yard touchdown drive that gave the Huskies a 14-7 lead. With Brunell at the helm, Washington walked to a 35-16 victory.

Brunell's stats in the Cal game weren't spectacular (four of 11, 83 yards), but he did engineer a couple of scoring drives. Now, he'll get the chance to show what

he can do at the start of the game.

"There's pressure to get things going right off the bat," Brunell said. "(Hobert's) felt that pressure; now it's my turn."

And Hobert, who has never lost a college game in which he started, will have to watch and

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The last time Oregon played a No. 1 team at Autzen Stadium was this 18-0 loss to USC in 1972 when Dan Fouts (11) was the Duck quarterback.

No. 1 doesn't come to Autzen often

The Oregon football program has not had much luck during the last 30 years against top-ranked schools.

It's been nearly 20 years since the last time a first-ranked football team visited Autzen Stadium, so this weekend will be an anniversary, of sorts. But being a 17-point underdog to No. 1 Washington could make for less than a happy celebration for Duck fans.

Washington is ranked first in one poll and second to Miami in another.

The game, which brings the Huskies to Eugene for the first time since 1988, will also be the first time that 16-year head coach Rich Brooks will lead his team onto the Autzen field against the "best" team in the country.

The 1972 national champion USC Trojans were the last top-ranked team to visit Autzen, coming during coach Dick Enright's first year as head of the Ducks.

In an Oct. 28, 1972, game that featured Ore-

gon greats Dan Fouts, Russ Francis and Steve Donnelly, the Ducks still came up short, losing 18-0 at their five-year-old field.

Ironically, it was former Duck assistant John McKay who led USC to three national championships in one decade.

Earlier that year, Oregon was unfortunate enough to visit then-No. 1 Oklahoma, leaving the state with a stinging 68-3 loss.

The first-ranked Cornhuskers of Nebraska also beat the visiting Ducks 34-7 in 1971.

Oregon has met the Huskies twice in the last 10 years when they were ranked No. 1.

In 1982, Oregon led first-ranked Washington 21-17 in the fourth quarter at Husky Stadium, but Oregon eventually succumbed to its rival, 35-21.

Two years later, the Ducks fell at Seattle to a No. 1 Washington team in another tight contest. That 17-10 loss was the last time Oregon squared off against the nation's top school.

Ducks vs. Huskies: full-fledged rivalry?

By Dave Charbonneau
Emerald Sports Editor

Forget the Civil War.

Oregon's game Saturday against No. 1-ranked Washington is the game for the Ducks this season. A victory over the Huskies would go down as one of the greatest wins in Oregon football history.

Year after year, the Ducks' biggest game of the year is not the season-closing Boredom Bowl against Oregon State; it is the Washington game.

Oregon fans anticipate the matchup with the Huskies for weeks every season. Although the result is usually negative for the Ducks, the same fans prepare for the game with the same excitement the following year.

Washington is Oregon's true rival.

During his 16 years with Oregon, Len Casanova, the Ducks' head coach from 1951 to 1966, won 82 games. Only three of those came against Washington.

"It's always been a big rivalry since I've been here," Casanova said. "It's kind of like an interstate championship."

Chuck Lehman, a senior at Washington and avid follower of the Huskies, said the Oregon-Washington game is near the top of the list of important games for Husky fans.

"As far as Pac-10 rivalries go," he said, "it ranks right up there with the Washington State game for us."

But many other fans at Washington, as well as at Oregon, feel that the "rivalry" tag may not fit the game.

For Washington, a win over Oregon on Saturday will be nothing more than clearing another obstacle disguised as a Pacific-10 Conference "challenger", as the Huskies continue their charge for a national championship.

Is this "rivalry" a rivalry in the true sense of the word — both teams setting their sights on winning that one, all-important game — or is it a game that Oregon has built up as a rivalry out of desperation?

The Ducks desperately want to beat the Huskies this year, and every year.

The Ducks desperately want to be mentioned in the same breath with Washington when it comes to the Pac-10.

The Ducks desperately want to be able to compete with Washington for the top recruits in the Northwest.

The only desperation for the Huskies — if it can be called that — is not losing ... to anyone.

Oregon has lost 52 of the 85 meetings between the two, including only three victories in its last 17 games against the Huskies.

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