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FOOTBALL

GIVIN' IT AWAY

Turnovers and special teams' mistakes are the reason Oregon is 4-4 and not 7-1.



Game	Opponents Points off TO's	Opponents Points off TO's	UO TO's inside 20-yard line	Opponents Points off special Team's mistakes
Hawaii 24 - 21	7		1	-
Stanford 21 - 7	7		1	-
USC 32 - 10	10		0	9
Washington 24 - 3	7		1	7
Total 101 - 41	31		3	16

Ducks plagued by mistakes

By Dave Charbonneau
Emerald Sports Editor

Oregon's football team has been standing on a wall all season.

On one side is the season that might have been, and on the other side is the season that might still be.

USC and Washington tried to push the Ducks off the wall and into the bowels of the Pacific-10 Conference basement, but Oregon regained its balance last weekend, defeating Washington State.

The Ducks — who have played one of the toughest schedules in the country — are now 4-4 and 2-3 in Pac-10 play. With three games remaining, Oregon could be a very strong candidate for a bowl bid if it can defeat California, UCLA and Oregon State. It's not as much of a long shot as it may sound, considering the Ducks play California and UCLA at home.

But the fact remains Oregon

could be in much, much better shape if not for its insistence of throwing games down the toilet with mistakes.

The Ducks' win over the Cougars was the first time Oregon defeated a team it shouldn't have beaten. But even the win over 6-1 Washington State could be looked at as a game Oregon should have been favored in, given the Cougars' weak schedule.

The Ducks' other three wins came against UNLV, Arizona State, and Texas Tech.

Oregon's losses have come against four teams that are ranked in the CNN-USA Today Top 25. But that doesn't mean the Ducks were overpowered, or even outplayed in their losses. They simply gave the games away.

Oregon has been outscored in its four losses, 101-41. Of the Ducks' opponent's points, 31 of those have come after an Oregon turnover and 16 have come as a direct result of a special teams' breakdown. In addition, Oregon turned the ball over a total of

three times inside its opponents 20-yard line during those games.

A turnover can never come at a "good" time, but those three turnovers came at particularly "bad" times.

"When you're playing good teams," Oregon coach Rich Brooks said, "you can't afford to turn the ball over. If you do, you're going to lose."

And lose they have.

In Oregon's season opener against Hawaii, the Ducks recovered from a 24-6 deficit to cut the lead to 24-24 in the fourth quarter. Oregon was closing in on the end zone late in the fourth quarter. They worked the ball down to the Rainbows' 15-yard line, but quarterback Danny O'Neil fumbled the snap from center, Hawaii recovered the fumble and the Ducks were history.

The following week against Stanford, Oregon trailed 13-7 in the third quarter and were on the verge of taking the lead from the

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