

PROFILE

Tate brings depth at tight end

By Erick Studenicka
Emerald Sports Reporter

Young Oregon players like Danny O'Neil and Rickey Whittle were expected to contribute from the outset of the season.

Other young players have emerged from near obscurity to make some surprising contributions to the now possibly bowl-bound Oregon football team.

One of the most surprising of the contributors has been sophomore tight end Willy Tate. After catching only two passes all of last season, Tate has 15 receptions in his last six games and is one of the team leaders with his 16.9 yards-per-reception average.

Tate received his chance to play when senior Vince Ferry injured his ribs early in the season. Ferry has since recuperated and remains the starting tight end, but because of Tate's strong showing while filling in for Ferry, the two now play on an alternating series basis.

Despite everyone's desire for playing time, Tate says the tight ends on the team remain close friends.

"I'd hate to be the coach who had to determine playing time," Tate said. "Vince is a great player, and so is O.B. Babbs, for that matter."

"We're really a close-knit group. We're a special group, not really receivers, but not really linemen either. You could say we're a group in limbo," Tate said.

Tate said that he receives the same amount of satisfaction from a good block as he does from a pass reception.

"I had a good block which opened up a path for Rickey Whittle to go 80 yards against Cal," Tate said. "Blocking on a run like that feels as good as any reception."

On the occasions when Tate misses a block, he's likely to take some heat from his roommate, quarterback O'Neil.

"One game I allowed a sack

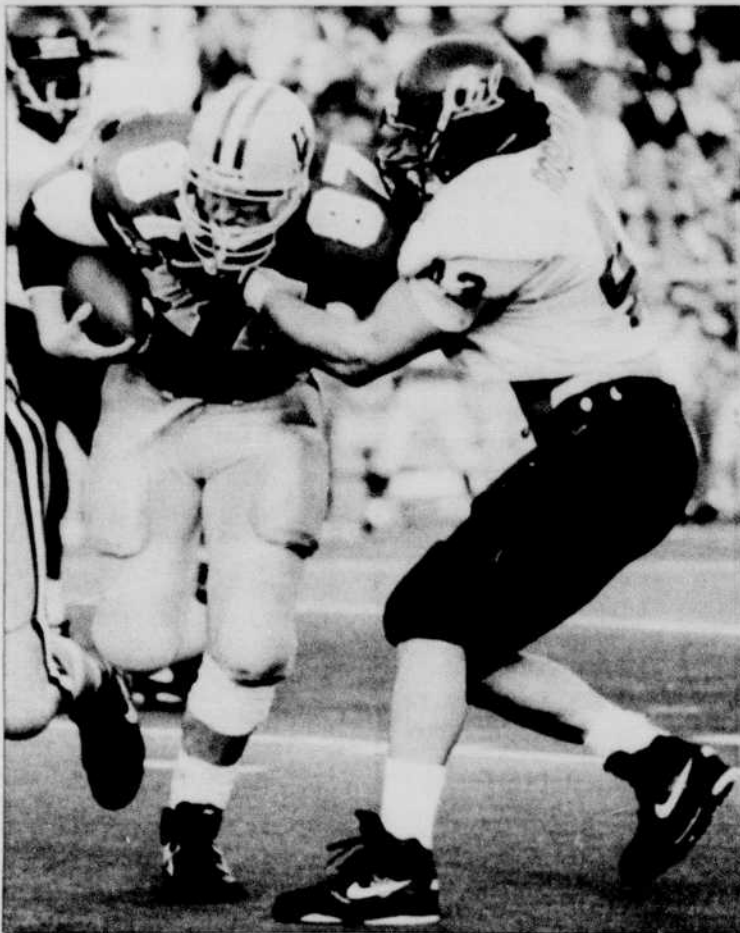


Photo by Michael Shindler

Willy Tate has played a big role in turning Oregon's season around.

on Danny, and after I went to watch some game films, I came back and my room was all messed up. He can give me a hard time sometimes," Tate said while laughing.

Tate had ample opportunity to block during his high school career, as his team, Elk Grove, Calif., ran about 90 percent of the time. Tate also played split end and linebacker as he led Elk Grove to an 11-1 record his senior year.

Tate was recruited heavily by Oregon and UCLA, but he said he feels no extra emotion for Saturday's game against the Bruins.

"UCLA has the great athletes and is well respected, but after one trip down to visit the cam-

pus, I couldn't picture myself going to school there. For my own college experience, Oregon was the perfect place to go," Tate said.

Tate said that his father, Richard, helped develop his football talent from a young age.

"My dad was the ultimate football dad. He would drag me outside to play catch at night; I still probably catch passes just from muscle memory I developed playing catch with him," Tate said.


Tate's father has now become the ultimate Duck football fan, driving up and down the West Coast to see his son play football.

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PREGAME PARTIES

The UO Alumni Association hosts pregame parties at Duck football games, both home and away. All alumni and friends are welcome.

At Autzen, look for the big green and yellow tent near the footbridge. The Lane County Chapter sponsors the event, open from two hours before kick-off until one hour after the game. Admission is free! There's plenty of food, drink, and Duck merchandise available for purchase inside.

If you plan on catching any away games, call the UOAA at (503) 346-5656 for party details.

1992 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5*	Hawaii	1:00 p.m.
Sept. 12	Stanford	12:30 p.m.
Sept. 19*	Texas Tech	12:30 p.m.
Sept. 26*	UNLV	1:00 p.m.
Oct. 3*	Arizona State	1:00 p.m.
Oct. 10	USC	3:30 p.m.
Oct. 17*	Washington	1:00 p.m.
Oct. 31	Washington State	2:00 p.m.
Nov. 7*	California	1:00 p.m.
	(Homecoming)	
Nov. 14*	UCLA	1:00 p.m.
Nov. 21	Oregon State	1:00 p.m.

*Indicates home games. For game tickets, call the Duck Ticket Office at (503) 346-4461, or 1-800-WEBFOOT.

Homecoming

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