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## Deacons devour deficit, Ducks

□ Oregon drops 19-point lead in Independence Bowl

By Dave Charbonneau  
Emerald Sports Editor

SHREVEPORT, La. — Oregon's football team saved its worst for last.

The Ducks gave up a season-worst 516 yards on defense and lost 39-35 to Wake Forest in the Poulan/Weed Eater Independence Bowl Dec. 31.

But truth be told, the outcome of the game would have been a lot worse for Oregon if it were not for the play of its de-

fense. Cornerbacks Herman O'Berry and Alex Molden each returned Demon Deacon turnovers for touchdowns that helped the Ducks build a 19-point lead late in the third quarter.

It took Wake Forest seven minutes to do away with that lead. The Deacons scored three touchdowns in that span as they confused Oregon's secondary with trick plays and long bombs to take a 32-29 lead with 12 minutes left in the game.

Another Wake Forest touchdown put the game away for good, as a late Duck rally fell short.

"This was one of the toughest losses I've ever experienced," Oregon head coach Rich Brooks said. "The game mirrored our season. We played well at times, and poorly at others. We got our fannies kicked in the second half."

By halftime, Oregon had caused four Deacon turnovers and led 22-10. After Molden's interception return for a touchdown early in the third quarter, it looked as if the Ducks had the game locked up. Oregon played that way the rest of the game.

"I'd like to say we weren't overconfident at that point," Oregon quarterback Danny O'Neil said, "but I think that may have been the case today."

Wake Forest devoured the deficit quickly by going deep against a confused Duck secondary. The Deacons scored the next 29 points of the game thanks to touchdown passes of 30 and 61 yards. The other two touchdowns were set up by passes of 35 and 41 yards.

Wake Forest may have put the Ducks away much earlier if it weren't for its first-half turnovers. On their opening drive, the Deacons ate up Oregon's defense, marching 80 yards on seven plays for a touchdown.

The key play of the drive was a 60-yard bomb from quarterback Keith West to Todd Dixon.

Oregon running back Sean Burwell tied the game with a 40-yard touchdown run on the following drive. That was the only big run the Ducks would have all game.

"I thought after Burwell broke that one for the touchdown, we would be able to keep running the ball effectively," Brooks said. "But after that, we didn't do much on the ground."

Oregon stopped the ensuing Deacon drive when safety Eric Castle picked off a pass at the Duck six-yard line and returned it 27 yards.

The Ducks' next score came when O'Berry ripped the ball out of Wake Forest running back Ned Moultrie's hands and ran 20 yards for a touchdown.

A Deacon field goal cut the Oregon lead to 13-10 in the second quarter, but O'Berry came up with another fumble recovery at the Wake Forest 10.

Four plays later, O'Neil hit tight end Vince Ferry with a three-yard touchdown pass to give Oregon a 19-10 lead.

Tommy Thompson kicked a 48-yard field goal with two minutes left in the first half, and the Ducks led 22-10 at halftime.

After Molden's touchdown return put Oregon up 29-10, the Deacons started to build momentum.

The first Wake Forest touchdown came on a one-yard run after a 35-yard pass from West to tight end John Henry Mills.

"You could feel their momentum growing," linebacker Joe Farwell said. "We knew we had to stop them, but we let the barrel roll over the top of us."

Oregon cut the lead to 39-35 with less than a minute left in the game, but an onside kick was recovered by Wake Forest.

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