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Duck football looks to step up

By Steve Mims
Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon head football coach Rich Brooks and his football team know what they must do to better last season's 6-6 record and take the next step toward the top of the Pacific-10 Conference.

"I really believe this team has an opportunity to be better than last year's group," Brooks said. "But to do that we obviously have to come out of the chute much better. The consistency of our offense is what we also must improve on if we want to be a contender in November for the Rose Bowl."

Oregon's season-opening 24-21 loss to Hawaii last year marked the first time since 1983 that a Duck team dropped its first game. The Ducks followed that disappointment by losing their conference opener to Stanford, 21-7, the next week.

The schedule will not make it easy for the Ducks to get out of the blocks quickly this season, as they open the season with four out of five games on the road. The Ducks have won only four of their last 14 road games, with two of those wins coming at Oregon State.

However, this year's team says it is not affected by either the schedule or unfriendly fans.

"I love playing on the road," Oregon senior wide receiver Derrick Deadwiler said. "The crowds don't bother me; plus, I really love to travel."

That type of attitude is to be expected from the veterans on the team, but it appears to have rubbed off on the younger players as well.

"A game is a game no matter where you play it," said sophomore Kory Murphy, who will be

1993 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE



Sept. 25 at Illinois
Oct. 2 at California
9 USC
16 at Arizona St.
23 at Washington
30 Washington St.
Nov. 6 at Arizona
13 Stanford
20 Oregon St.

lining up across from Deadwiler at wide receiver. "We have to keep our cool on the road because you can get sidetracked, but if you keep your head in the game, everything should be all right."

The Ducks opened the season at Colorado State before returning home to face Montana. This weekend Oregon travels to Big Ten country to meet Illinois in its final non-conference game. The Pac-10 schedule begins Oct. 2 at California and includes later visits to Arizona State, Washington and Arizona.

For the third consecutive season, Danny O'Neil will be the man in charge of directing the offense. The junior from Newport Beach, Calif., put his name among esteemed company last year when he became the fourth quarterback in school history to throw for more than 2,000 yards in a season.

Only Bill Musgrave, Chris Miller and Dan Fouts have surpassed O'Neil's total of 2,132 yards in 1992. With 17 college starts behind him, O'Neil said he feels more comfortable than ever with the starting role.

"I've put away the little things that bothered me," O'Neil said. "Now I can just come out, make reads and throw the football, and I am anxious to do that."

O'Neil will have familiar company in the backfield as he is joined by tailbacks Sean Burwell and Ricky Whittle and fullback Juan Shedrick. That trio has a combined 50 starts at Oregon. Burwell is Oregon's second all-time leading rusher, and Whittle gained 634 yards on the ground a year ago.

Brooks said he is excited about his options in the backfield.

"We have some sets with one back, some with a fullback and a tailback and others with two tailbacks. How much we use those will depend on how they work early in the season," he said.

The experienced backfield should take some pressure off of a talented, but inexperienced, group of receivers. Deadwiler and Brian Brown, who has struggled with injuries in his career, are the only seniors

Turn to **BROOKS**, Page 18B

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