

# Schuler preparing to face Ducks

By Scott Simonson  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Denny Schuler may have left the Duck football coaching staff for professional reasons, but when he faces his old team for the first time, it will be personal.

"I'd be kidding myself if I said this was just another game. I'd be lying to the media and to my team," Schuler said. "We got film of Oregon (a week ago) Wednesday. Wednesday night I was looking at it."

After seven years of coaching at Oregon, Schuler resigned in February to become an assistant coach at California, leaving the Ducks' defensive coordinator position to become the Golden Bears' offensive coordinator.

Schuler left his alma mater and the successful defense he helped build to rejoin his boyhood friend, Cal head coach Keith Gilbertson.

Schuler has mixed feelings as he prepares the Cal offense for Saturday's game with the Ducks in Berkeley. He said the Ducks will be the toughest defense the Bears have seen this season, and he should know.

Schuler came to Oregon in 1986. In 1985, the Ducks were last in the Pacific-10 Conference in passing defense, rushing defense and total defense. After two years under Schuler, Oregon's defense was fourth in the conference.

The improvement didn't stop there. But as the defense got tougher, Schuler was re-examining his career goals. When Oregon State searched for a new head coach in 1990, Schuler admitted he was interested in the job.

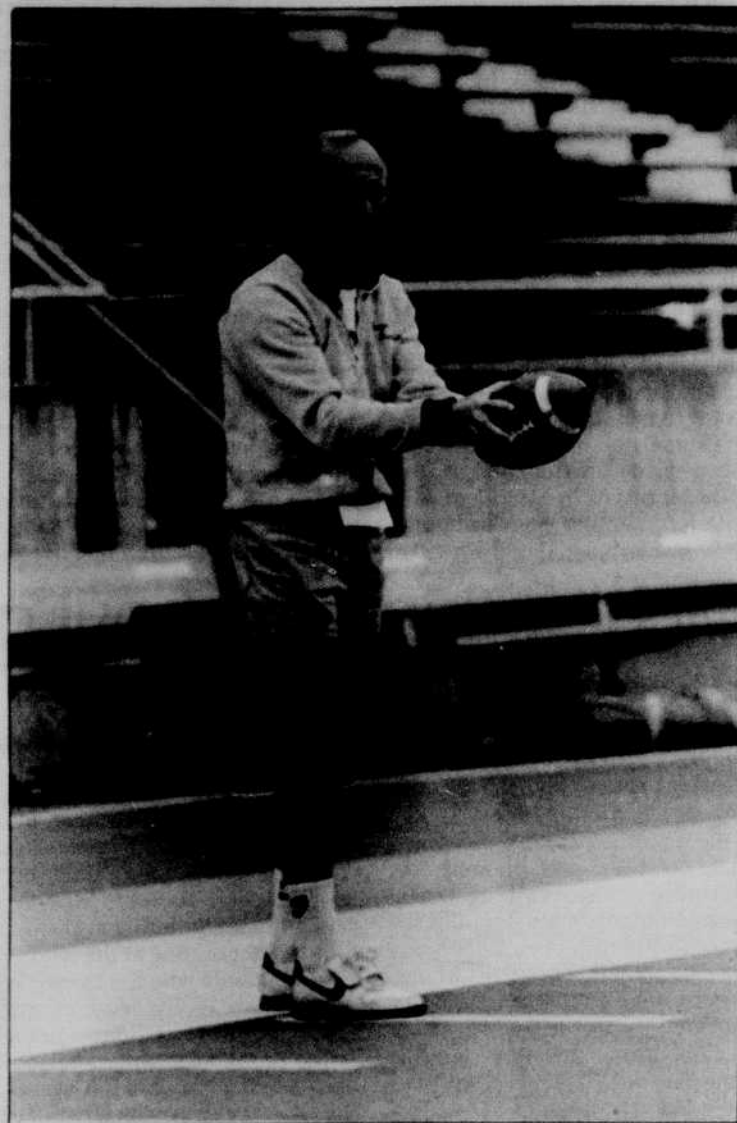
"A few years back, I thought I needed a new goal," he said. He set his sights on a head coaching job and becoming an offensive coordinator was a step in that direction.

"The only reason I did this was for professional reasons. I thought it could open some doors and elongate my career. I imagine there may be a few more stops down the road before I'm through," Schuler said.

Schuler's decision to leave Eugene was a difficult move away from family and a city he enjoyed.

"These things are never black and white, but this is a good move. There have been times I've said to myself, 'Geez, was this a good move?'", Schuler said. "As I get older, it gets harder to move. When I was younger, these changes were no problem. Now, they're not so easy."

A quick start by the Bears has helped ease Schuler's move to California. He said success has also helped with the switch to coaching offense instead of defense, a change that meant leaving his comfort zone.



FILE PHOTO  
Former Duck defensive coordinator Denny Schuler is preparing to face Oregon in his new role: California's offensive coordinator.

"I'd be lying if I said there weren't a few anxious moments before the first game," he said. "Luckily, we've been able to move the ball and put up some pretty good numbers, and my quarterback has been playing pretty well."

Now Schuler's offense prepares to face his old defense. He knows the strengths and weaknesses of the Duck defense, but he also knows to expect some surprises.

"Obviously, I would seem to know their personnel from the inside out, but I'm sure we'll see some things that weren't expected," he said.

Schuler hasn't been completely analytical in his scouting of the Duck defense. He found himself studying more than coverages and formations when watching film.

"I'm curious. How's Chad Cota playing? I want to see how Alex Molden's knee looks. But I also want to see how much of the defense is like it used to be and how much has been added," he said.

In recent years, games between the Ducks and the Bears have been routs. High-scoring offensive performances by the home teams have domi-

nated, but Schuler said things should be different when the Ducks visit Berkeley.

"They're well-coached, they have some excellent players, and I don't expect a blowout. It should be a close game," he said.

Schuler is still striving for a head coaching job, but said his career goals aren't a concern right now.

"During the season you just do the best you can," Schuler said. "In the off-season, I might speculate about my prospects for the future. I've always felt that if you just concentrate on today, tomorrow will take care of itself."

And so Schuler concentrates on his next opponent and enjoys his work with Gilbertson. The head coach and Schuler grew up together in Washington and worked together early in their coaching careers.

Their coaching honeymoon isn't over yet, but Schuler called working with Gilbertson "a real good relationship. Usually when you have friends working together, things are not as easy as they might seem. But we've had so much success that adversity hasn't really hit yet. It's been a lot of fun."

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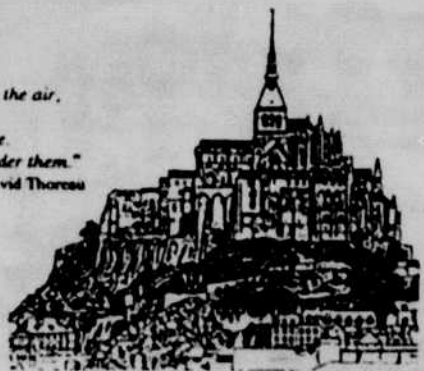
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