

# Pellum ready for homecoming

By Steve Mims  
Oregon Daily Emerald

While much of the talk about this Saturday's Oregon-California game has revolved around former Oregon defensive coordinator Denny Schuler facing his old squad, the Ducks have a coach playing an identical role.

When Schuler left Eugene in February to take the offensive coordinator position at California, the Ducks replaced him with linebacker coach Nick Aliotti. Oregon head coach Rich Brooks responded by filling Aliotti's spot with Don Pellum, a key member of California's football program the past few years.

Pellum had an assortment of roles during his three years at Berkeley involving recruiting and student services. Pellum played a big part in each of the past three recruiting classes for California, but says he does not plan to let his professional role this weekend interfere with personal relationships.

"Cal was great to me," Pellum said. "I loved it. But when I talk to the kids there now, we rarely talk about football but instead discuss school, girlfriends, etc."

Pellum said that while Schuler and Aliotti will play big parts in determining the outcome of the game Saturday, it is important to remember the players are the most important part.

"There has been a lot of talk this week about how Schuler and Aliotti will fare against each other," Pellum said. "But in reality, it is the kids who will be playing. Denny and Nick won't be suiting up, it is the kids who have to show up and play."

Pellum played outside linebacker for Oregon from 1982-84 before moving into the recruiting department for the school. This week, his job will be to help find a way to stop Cal's powerful offense which has averaged 44 points per contest this season.

Although the Golden Bears present the stiffest test so far this year for the Oregon defense, Pellum says he does not plan to change anything before Saturday's game.

"We are going to do basically the same things we have all year," Pellum said. "The thing we need to do is play low and read their formations. We must play fundamental defense and watch the ball,

instead of watching what the other players on defense are doing. We have to believe in the defense and trust each player to be where they should be, rather than run in and let the quarterback run around us."

California's offense has improved greatly during its second year under head coach Keith Gilbertson, who replaced Bruce Snyder prior to last year. Pellum said the players are becoming more comfortable in the system and the results prove it.

"As a unit, the offense is better because they have had one year to get together under Gilbertson's system," Pellum said. "Last year was a completely different system for the players, but now they have had a year and another spring to grasp and understand it."

The leader of Cal's offense has been junior quarterback Dave Barr, who ranks fourth in the country in quarterback efficiency and has completed 66 percent of his passes for 942 yards and nine touchdowns. The biggest improvement for Barr this year has been avoiding interceptions. Barr has thrown 75 straight passes without an interception after throwing 15 interceptions last year.

"Barr was really good last year," Pellum said. "But he's even better in his second year in the system. Reading defenses is where he has really excelled and his arm is as good as anyone's. He's a pretty darned good quarterback."

Brooks backed up Pellum's claim that the Golden Bears' offense is getting stronger as it becomes accustomed to Gilbertson's schemes.

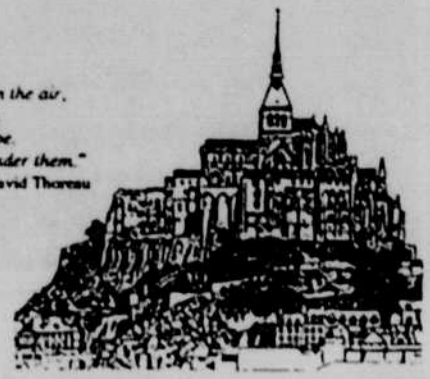
"Cal is obviously playing well on offense," Brooks said. "They are a very balanced unit. I don't think they are doing many things different from a year ago, they are just doing them better. Their quarterback is smooth and knows how to avoid pressure."

Pellum said that while he is familiar with Cal's system, he does not think he can give the Ducks any hidden secrets to help them in Saturday's game.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about how much I know," Pellum said. "I was around them the past few years, but haven't been this year. A kid who does not play well one year may mature and become a key player the next year."

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