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DUCK FOOTBALL

Improved receivers lead Ducks

By Scott Simonson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon assistant football coach John Ramsdell isn't interested in hearing about how well people think his receivers are playing. He knows they can play better.

Ramsdell was understandably pleased with senior split end Derrick Deadwiler's record-setting performance last week. But Ramsdell wasn't completely satisfied.

"Derrick Deadwiler had 200-some yards," Ramsdell said. "But he also had the possibility for a lot more. There were a couple of times where the other guy just barely caught him."

Deadwiler's 11 catches for a Oregon record 234 yards against California was one reason Ramsdell can say that the Duck receivers have met his expectations for the early stages of the season. More than performances, though, the receiving corps' potential is what excites Ramsdell.

"They've got a chance to be as good as any group we've had in the past few years," he said. "They're making plays we haven't been making in the past couple of years. They're catching the ball deep."

Besides Deadwiler, flankers Cristin McLemore, Brian Brown

and Dameron Ricketts and split end Kory Murphy have seen action for the Ducks this year.

Oregon's offense has been delivering big plays more frequently than most Duck teams in recent years, and this year's group of receivers has been a major part of that success.

"These guys have the ability to make the big play. They can do something with the ball after the catch," Ramsdell said.

However, Ramsdell said, the receivers don't deserve all of the credit.

"Danny (O'Neil) has been more accurate delivering the ball this year," he said. "And our protection's been better. We're just at the end of the chain," he said.

Throwing the ball deep has done more than just provide extra excitement. Ramsdell said Oregon receivers can make the big play help open up the rest of the offense while making their own lives easier.

"At Oregon, we've always believed in trying to keep the opposition off balance," he said. "It's also important for our receivers that we're not always throwing quick passes."

Ramsdell gave his scouting report on the strengths of each receiver:

- Deadwiler: "Derrick's very explosive. He's a quick guy, and he's very good at running with the ball after the catch. He's excitement."

- McLemore: "He's outstanding in terms of catching the ball. He has excellent range and can make the tough catch. He's acrobatic, and he's a tough competitor."

- Murphy: "He's very quick and has great separation skills. Before he got hurt he was probably our best route runner."

- Brown: "He's a tough guy. He's got great ball-catching skills. He's kind of our dependable, journeyman receiver."

- Ricketts: "He's young and he's got great potential. ... He's just getting started for us, but he can really play. He's going to be a great asset for us."

The youth of the receiving corps is one reason Ramsdell is hoping for continued improvement. McLemore and Murphy are sophomores, and Ricketts is a freshman.

"The younger they are, the more they have to learn," he said.

Ramsdell said demands had been especially heavy on Murphy, who is doubtful for Saturday's game because of a knee injury.

"We have asked Kory to play a lot of positions, probably more than we've ever asked from a young receiver, and he's responded very well," Ramsdell said.

Head coach Rich Brooks also praised the receivers this week, but warned of a USC secondary that is "fast and physical."

"Our receiving corps is doing an outstanding job. With Kory out, the others have stepped it up and are doing a terrific job," he said.

Ramsdell said the Ducks will have to continue to step up their level of play in order to compete with tougher opponents as the season progresses, but he doesn't think that will be a problem.

"I believe we're just getting started," he said. "I don't see these guys being satisfied with what they've done so far. They're looking for improvement and trying to get better."

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