Ducks finally face Arizona defense

By Steve Mims

Cregon Davy Emerald

Oregon will get its first chance to see what could be the greatest defense in Pacific-10 Conference history this weekend in Tucson.

Oregon and Arizona have not played each other in three years, allowing the Ducks to avoid the defensive machine that Dick Tomey's Wildcats have built in the desert. However, Oregon can no longer avoid the Cactus Curtain defense, but instead will face it head-on Saturday.

The numbers that Arizona's defense has put up this year have been impressive, to say the least. For example:

 Arizona leads the nation in rushing defense, allowing 22.1 yards per carry. In other words, Wildcat opponents average 24 inches per rush.

 Arizona leads the nation in total defense, giving up 211.8 yards per game.

 Arizona leads the Pac-10 in scoring defense (13.4) and passing efficiency defense (100.44 rating).

"Arizona is as good as any defense we have seen," Oregon head coach Rich Brooks said. "They do it with a four and five man defensive front and whip you whether you double team them or not."

Brooks will lead his Ducks into Tucson to face the 'Cats this Saturday. Oregon couldn't have picked a worse time to face Arizona, which lost its lead in the Rose Bowl race last weekend with a 37-17 loss at UCLA. The loss was the first of the year for the Wildcats and knocked them into a threeway tie for first place in the conference.

"I'd prefer to play them after a win over UCLA," Brooks said. "They know they can't afford a loss."

Arizona's defense gave up 37 points to the Bruins last week, but that statistic doesn't tell the whole story. Arizona's offense turned over the ball three times in its own territory, once at midfield and and threw an interception that was returned for a touchdown.

UCLA rushed for 71 yards against Arizona, more than any other team has all year. In fact, 71 yards is more than Arizona gave up in its first six games combined.

Arizona's rushing defense has showed some cracks lately, allowing 68 yards to Washington State two weeks ago, before giving up the 71 to UCLA last week. Those numbers would be considered some of the best in the country alone, if not for the Wildcats' performance in their first four

games.

Arizona allowed minus-eight yards rushing in its season-opening win over UTEP, followed by minus-32 yards to Pacific and minus-27 yards to Illinois. Added together, the Wildcats limited their opponents to minus-67 yards rushing in their first three games. In its fourth game, Arizona allowed 50 yards rushing, but that was against Oregon State, which leads the nation in rushing with 308 yards per game.

Arizona's defense almost singlehandedly beat Illinois 16-14, scoring two touchdowns and registering a safety for the other two points.

The heart of Arizona's defense is its defensive line, which has stuffed opponents when they try to run, and sacked quarterbacks when they try to pass. All-American Rob Waldrop came out of nowhere last season to establish himself as one of the preeminent noseguards in college football. The 6-foot-2, 275-pound senior has continued his strong play this year, compiling seven sacks and 39 tackles, 11 of them for loss.

This year it has been defensive end Tedy Bruschi who has come of age for the Wildcats. Bruschi didn't start last year, but showed his potential with four and a half sacks. This year Bruschi has already set a school record with 14.5 sacks, plus another eight tackles for loss.

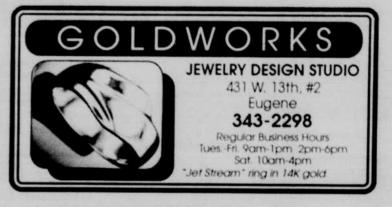
"Tedy Bruschi is unbelievable," Brooks said. "I have never seen a guy play from snap to whistle like he does."

Arizona head coach Dick Tomey backed up Brooks' comments about the intensity of Bruschi.

"No one in college football plays harder than Tedy," Tomey said."His motor is always running."

The Wildcats ability to stay healthy on defense has been a major factor in their success. Arizona has started the same person every game at each position except left cornerback, where three different players have played. By contrast, Oregon has lost two key defensive players for the year and countless others are doubtful for this weekend's game.

Cornerback Herman O'Berry and defensive end Mark Slyman are out for the year. Brooks said Wednesday that defensive linemen Romeo Bandison, Silila Malepeai and Gary Williams are doubtful for Saturday's game, as are cornerback Alex Molden and safety Jeff Sherman.





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Jones named top Pac-10 defender

Oregon outside linebacker Ernest Jones was named Pacific-10 Conference player of the week for his play in Oregon's 46-23 win over Washington State on Saturday.

Jones, a 6-foot-2, 230-pound senior, had seven tackles, including five tackles for losses of 19 yards, in Saturday's game. In addition, Jones had four quarterback sacks, giving him a schoolrecord 26 career sacks. Jones leads the Ducks with 10 sacks and 14 tackles for loss. Jones is two sacks shy of the school record of 12 sacks in a season, currently held by Mike Walter.

Jones is the second Oregon player in three weeks to be honored by the conference. Safety Chad Cota was named defensive player of the week following Oregon's 45-36 win over Arizona State on October 16.

Oregon quarterback Danny O'Neil and kicker Tommy Thompson were nominated for offensive and special teams players of the week, respectively.

Two Arizona State players were also honored by the conference for their contributions in the Sun Devils 32-17 upset of Washington. Running back Mario Bates was named Pac-10 Offensive Player of the Week after rushing for 163 yards and two touchdowns on Saturday. The effort was Bate's third consecutive 100-yard rushing game.

Sun Devils kicker Jon Baker was named Special Teams Player of the Week after kicking field goals of 32, 34 and 48 yards. Bates and Baker are the first ASU players to win Conference player of the week honors this year.





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Thursday, November 4, 1993 Oregon Daily Emerald