

OSU building a new tradition under Pettibone

By Steve Mims
Oregon Daily Emerald

Three wins may not seem like much to most college football teams, but to Oregon State head coach Jerry Pettibone, it is a start.

The Beavers enter this weekend's Civil War clash at Oregon with three wins, more than they racked up in Pettibone's first two years at the helm. Win or lose this weekend, Pettibone has already declared this season a success.

"I already feel great about the year we've had," Pettibone said. "In only our third year, we beat one bowl team (Wyoming) and beat another possible bowl team (Arizona State)."

It's not just the wins that have Pettibone and the rest of the Beaver believers excited, it is the competitiveness of the program. Oregon State has played well in most of its games this year and has had its chances to win games. In Pettibone's first two years, the Beavers lost 19 games, 16 of them by double digits. This year, the Beavers have lost only four games by more than 10 points.

Recently, Oregon State has done even better, losing to two upper-division Pacific-10 Conference teams by a combined 10 points. The Beavers almost knocked UCLA off of its Rose Bowl perch four weeks ago, taking a 17-14 lead into the fourth quarter before kicker Brooke Knight missed a late field goal, giving the Bruins a 20-17 victory.

The following week the Beavers dropped a tight 31-27

OSU RECORD	
YEAR	RECORD
1971	5-6-0
1972	2-9-0
1973	2-9-0
1974	3-8-0
1975	1-10-0
1976	2-10-0
1977	2-9-0
1978	3-7-1
1979	1-10-0
1980	0-11-0
1981	1-10-0
1982	1-9-1
1983	2-8-1
1984	2-9-0
1985	3-8-0
1986	3-8-0
1987	2-9-0
1988	4-6-1
1989	4-7-1
1990	1-10-0
1991	1-10-0
1992	1-9-1
1993	3-7-0

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decision to Stanford, the best offensive team in the conference. Oregon State fought back from a 24-7 third-quarter deficit to get within 31-27, before a late Stanford interception sealed the defeat. A week later, Oregon State took a halftime lead on Washington before the Huskies steam-rolled out of the locker room at halftime to get a 28-21 win.

So what does all this mean, losing to these three teams by a combined 14 points? Not much to many, but to the Beavers, it is a definite sign of progress. It had been four years since an Oregon State team beat Stanford, eight years since a win over Washington, and you have to go back to 1978 to find the last time Oregon State beat the Bruins.

Does this mean that Pettibone and his staff are satisfied with just being competitive?

"No," Pettibone said. "Moral victories don't mean anything to us anymore. We're to the point where we want to win. We feel we have a chance to do this every week."

To understand the optimism that is coming out of Corvallis, one must first understand the beaten psyche of Beaver fans. Optimism has flown into Corvallis often during the past few decades, but it always leaves a few years later, taking another coach with it.

The Beavers have not had a winning season since 1970, making this the 23rd consecutive losing season. In fact recently, they haven't really been close. Oregon State has won more than three games only three times during the past 23 years. During that span, the Beavers have won two games on seven occasions, one game during another seven years and have been winless once.

Four different coaching changes have been made during that span, each one bringing a different approach to turn things

around and optimism with it. Craig Fertig took over from Dee Andros, the last Oregon State coach to have a winning record in a year, but he left after four years and an 8-36-1 record.

Next up was Joe Avezzano, whose teams lacked discipline on and off the field, and the results reflected it. Avezzano's teams never won more than two games in one year, and after five years he caught a plane out of town with a 6-47-2 record.

The Beavers chose to try and improve through the air next, when new head coach Dave Kragthorpe brought his "Air Express" package into Corvallis in 1985. Although Kragthorpe never did get the Beavers over the hump, he did compile some wins.

Kragthorpe won three games during two separate years, and twice led the team to four-win, one-tie seasons. However, after a 1-10 season in 1990 that included a loss to Division I-AA Montana, Kragthorpe was sent packing as well.

When Oregon State fired Kragthorpe, it sent the program into a 180-degree turnaround by installing Pettibone and his wishbone running attack at the helm. Pettibone only won one game in his first year, but it was a big 14-3 win over Oregon in Eugene, enough to keep boosters happy for a while.

Pettibone's wishbone offense has taken a while to be put in place, but the results have been

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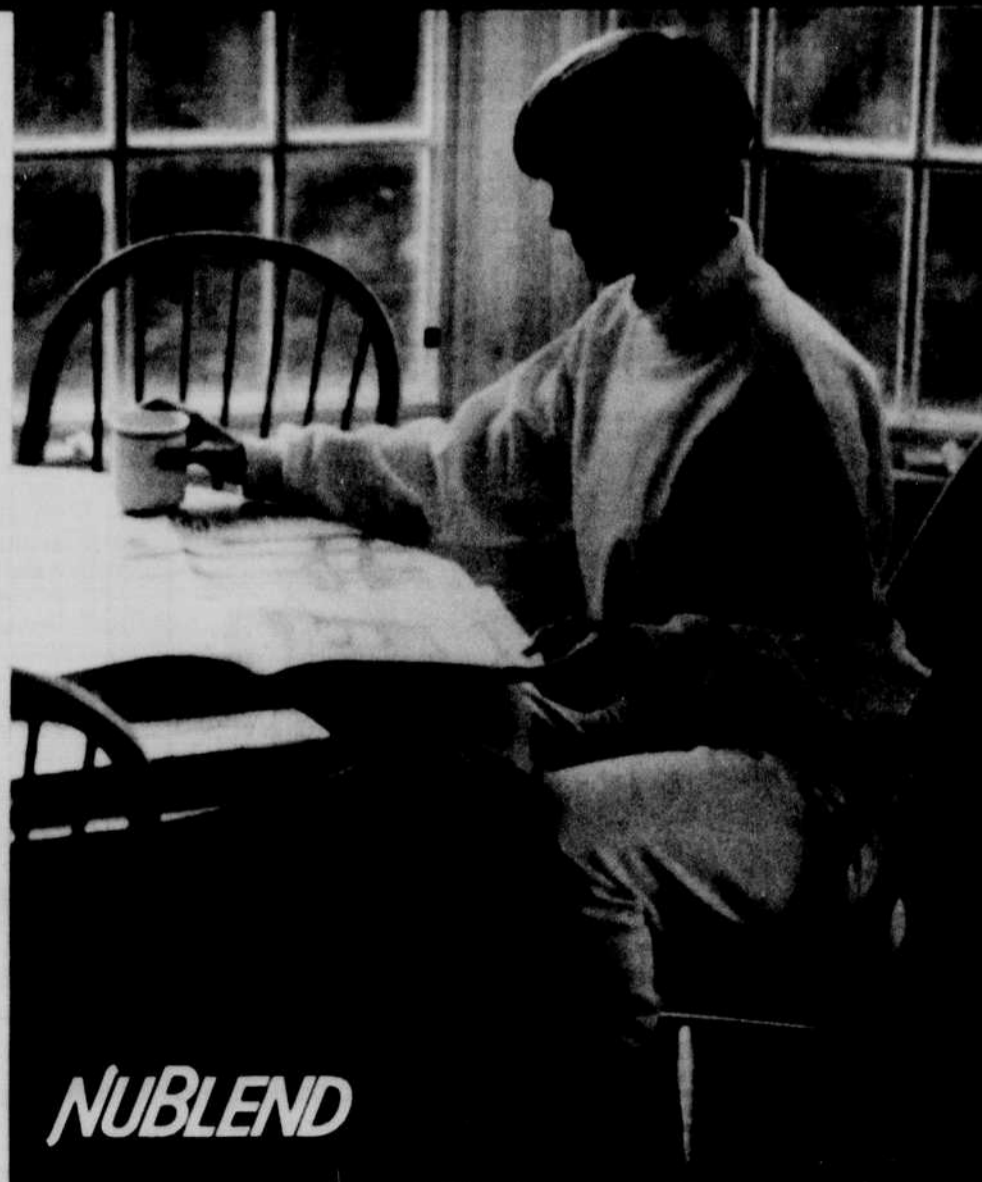
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