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SPORTS EXTRA FOOTBALL

Oregon wary of upstart Devils

Mark McTyre

Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon has been the hot-bed of the Pacific-10 the past two weeks, pulling off upset victories over Washington and Arizona.

The Ducks' game will not be televised this week, but the excitement will still be apparent at Autzen Stadium when the Arizona State Sun Devils come to town.

This game concludes the Ducks' seven-game home schedule and will feature the last hurrahs for 13 Oregon seniors. When the seniors and the rest of Ducks take the field, the team will become involved in its first league race in four decades.

After two-straight weeks of stunning victories, the Ducks (6-3 overall, 4-1 Pac-10) face their first barrier in the run for the roses versus a tough Sun Devils squad (3-5, 2-3).

Arizona State is coming off its biggest win this season after upsetting the 21st-ranked Brigham Young Cougars last week, 36-15. The Sun Devils' final tally of 36 points matched their season-high total that was scored in a one-point victory over Stanford.

Quarterback Jake Plummer threw for 327 yards against BYU and was backed up by a solid performance by the Arizona State defense. In the first quarter, the defense only allowed one first down and 44 yards of total offense—keeping the Cougars scoreless for the half. Arizona State is 3-1 this season when it scores first.

The Ducks were unable to score until late into the third quarter in last week's victory over the Arizona Wildcats. With the Sun Devils boasting a 3-1 record when scoring first, could this pose a problem with the slow starting offense of the Ducks?

"It looks like their defense is coming together," Oregon head coach Rich Brooks said. "What has hurt them so far this year is they've given up some big plays. We're going to need all the help we can get in the stands."

Although the Ducks' have not been known to have a big-play offense, other areas are beginning to click.

Even though Oregon has won 19 games with O'Neil as its starting quarterback, he will be remembered most for rallying the Ducks to victories over nationally ranked Washington and Arizona the last two weeks.

Against Washington, O'Neil drove the offense an unbelievable 98 yards for the winning points, completing 4 of 4 passes. Against Arizona, O'Neil led the Ducks on scoring drives of 70 and 53 yards for the 10-9 victory.

This year, O'Neil is far from his statistics of the past but he has hit a hot streak lately. Oregon is unbeaten in the last four games that O'Neil has started and it hardly seems to matter that he has yet to throw for 200 yards in a game this season, after surpassing the 300-yard mark six times last year. O'Neil has 7,099 yards passing

along with 49 touchdowns in his career at Oregon.

"Danny did a great job moving (the ball) down the field," Brooks said of last week's game against Arizona.

The Ducks are putting the exclamation points on the majority of its possessions when the team gets the chance and the offense is not giving away the ball in key situations like it has in the past.

Oregon has scored on 28 of 32 opportunities inside the red zone (inside the opposition's 20-yard line). On these occasions, the Ducks have scored 24 touchdowns. Tony Graziani's intercepted pass against USC after Oregon had reached the Trojans' 19-yard line has been Oregon's only unsuccessful red zone attempt in its last 18 attempts.

Conversely, the Ducks' defense has been able to shut down teams inside the red zone. After last week, Gang Green improved to 12th in rushing defense (102.8) and 16th in passing efficiency defense.

Now that the Ducks own a share of first place in conference, Brooks feels that things will start getting more interesting for his team.

"We're in the race, but to stay there, we have to play well against Arizona State," Brooks said. "This is going to be a real test because we've come through four ranked teams at 3-1 and now we go into what the experts are saying are games the Ducks should win. If we think we've arrived just because we beat Arizona, we're mistaken."

EMERALD FOOTBALL PICKS



Chris Metz



Kris Henry



Mark McTyre



Trevor Kearney



Michele Ross



Kaly Soto



Jeff Paslay

	Chris Metz	Kris Henry	Mark McTyre	Trevor Kearney	Michele Ross	Kaly Soto	Jeff Paslay
Oregon -8 ASU	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	ASU	ASU	Oregon
Washington -8 Stanford	Washington	Washington	Washington	Washington	Stanford	Stanford	Washington
Arizona -19 Cal	Cal	Cal	Cal	Arizona	Cal	Arizona	Cal
Washington St. -3 USC	USC	Washington St.	Washington St.	Washington St.	USC	Washington St.	Washington St.
Ohio St. -1.5 Wisconsin	Ohio St.	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Ohio St.	Ohio St.	Ohio St.
Virginia -8 Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke
Air Force -13 Army	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Army
Texas A&M -4.5 Texas	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas	Texas	Texas A&M
OVERALL	18-30	18-30	19-29	17-31	22-26	24-24	22-26

RECEIVERS

Continued from Page 2B

can question their recent performance, especially in clutch situations.

"The confidence and level of play that we're playing at right now is kind of unstoppable," Ricketts said. "We're young and hungry."

Brooks tends to agree.

"They're poised and confident athletes," Brooks said about his youthful set of receivers.

Coming into the season, Brooks and the coaching staff were counting heavily on the play of McLemore, but after two weeks on the shelf, he is

just now starting to recover from an ankle injury that put him on crutches. While undoubtedly missing McLemore's presence, the offense of the Ducks hasn't missed a beat.

Murphy's tragic injury had already taken what had been one of the strengths on the team and suddenly turned it into a question mark, pulling rabbits out of its hat at the right times.

"A year ago it could have been a lot of pressure," Ricketts said. "But the guys are really stepping it up now."

"It's good that we're getting that experience early to understand what we have to do when we get older."