

# Draw The Line

**Kris Henry**  
*Oregon Daily Emerald*

**S**ome men are born to battle in the trenches of the football field. These unknown warriors pave the way for others to shine and provide the foundation for offensive productivity. These rugged men come to be known as offensive linemen.

Oregon has recycled and restructured the roles of these individuals more than any other Pacific-10 team this season.

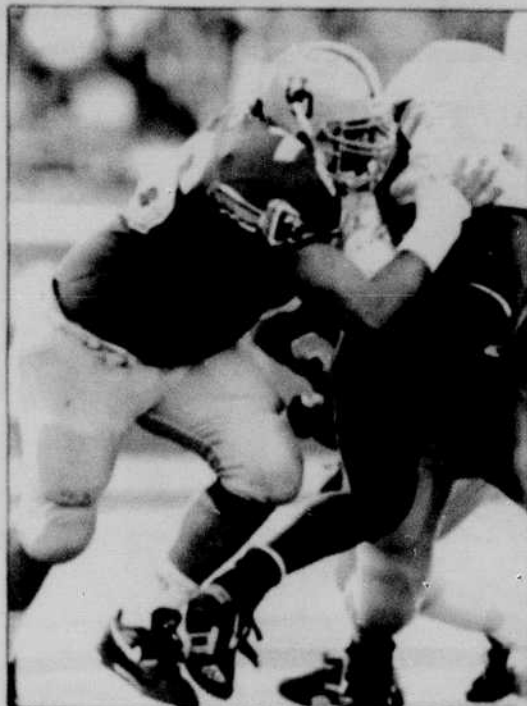
The Oregon Ducks' offensive line began the year much-maligned because of inexperience and questions about their overall ability. There were concerns on whether the offensive line could step up and prove itself against some of the nation's roughest defenses that reside in the Pac-10.

In 10 games this season, the Ducks have started 10 different players in seven separate combinations. Five of the linemen have started at two positions this season — Willy Rife, Eric Reid, Paul Wiggins, Tasi Malepeai and Bob Baldwin. Injuries have forced this restructuring of responsibilities and kept those charting the Oregon offensive line depth chart very busy.

Other linemen to see action this year have been Steve Hardin, Mark Gregg, Dave Cuttrel, Kyle Strait, David Weber and Michael Klews.

"We started with four guys who just didn't have much college playing experience," said Baldwin, a sophomore who has seen time at both guard positions. "It took a while for us to get things going and work well as a group."

All the line up shifts and new faces seem to have paid off as the Oregon offensive line has begun putting together



FILE PHOTO  
Willy Rife has been one of the keys on the offensive line, starting in all 10 games.



FILE PHOTO  
The offensive line has held its own this season and has been a driving force behind the team's success.

er punishing attacks on recent opponents.

"I knew that it was going to take some time for the line to gel," offensive line coach Steve Greatwood said, "but I was confident that this was a fairly athletic, competitive and hard-working group."

The Oregon offensive line has barely begun to cut its teeth on football at the college level with contributions coming from five sophomores, two redshirt freshmen, one junior, one true freshman and only two seniors.

Typically, a starting college offensive lineman is a junior or senior since it takes a while to learn the blocking

schemes and get physically prepared to ward off defenders.

"There are no superstars in this group," said Hardin, the Ducks' senior right tackle who started the first five games before succumbing to an ankle injury. "(The offensive line) is just a hard-working group."

Getting exposure for Oregon's young offensive line is something that will pay big dividends for the Ducks in the future. The group has already paid off for Oregon this year in terms of supplying a fairly deep crop of linemen that can answer the call to duty.

"We're still not playing to where we need to all the time," Greatwood said, "but overall I've been pleased with the development of a lot of young players. I feel very comfortable putting any number of combinations in there."

However, play from the offensive line this season has been inconsistent because of the recycling of several players due to injuries.

"We've had games where we just knocked people off the ball and we've had games where things just didn't go the way we wanted," Baldwin said.

"But I would say that Oregon's offensive line is going to be a force for years to come because we're so young and getting a lot of exposure."

The chemistry of the offensive line has come from the togetherness and appreciation of each team member.

"This is the closest I've ever been to my teammates in all the seasons that I've been (at Oregon)," said Malepeai, a sophomore who has seen playing time at right guard and right tackle. "My freshman year, I was never really close to anybody other than my brothers and my fresh-

Turn to **OFFENSE**, Page 7B

## THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

**Chris Metz**  
*Oregon Daily Emerald*

At 6-foot-2, 236 pounds, tight end Josh Wilcox isn't the biggest front-line member of the Oregon offense. But if you were to measure his heart and determination, pound-for-pound he might be the strongest guy on anybody's playing field, literally leaving a trail of blood, sweat and tears a mile long on the field of battle.

In his sophomore year, Wilcox has emerged as a quality tight end that not only fills the pass-catching void left by the desertion of former tight end Willy Tate, but he also brings added blocking skills that complement an already solid offensive line.

"He has great games when he doesn't even catch a pass," Oregon head coach Rich Brooks said. "He's doing a terrific job of blocking this year. That's a real difference for us at the tight end position."

Wilcox has caught 18 passes this season and leads the team in yards per catch (15.3). He has also grabbed five touchdown passes. Despite his success this season, the never-satisfied Wilcox strives to keep improving his game and eliminating any mistakes, no matter how big or small, constantly putting pressure on himself to perform.

"I'm my own worst critic,"

*I don't want to be just an average 'Joe Blow' guy. I want to be Josh Wilcox.*

— Josh Wilcox  
*Oregon tight end*

Wilcox said. "After a game, I'll remember everything I did bad. I'm never satisfied with my performance."

The intensity that Wilcox brings to the football field is simply a physical manifestation of his off-the-field personality. Wilcox describes himself as a bit "off the wall" and believes that football is a logical outlet for his unique way of thinking.

"It's a two-way street," Wilcox said. "You either really know me or you think 'This guy's a wacko.' And the people that do know me still know I'm a wacko."

"I don't want to be just an average 'Joe Blow' guy," Wilcox said. "I want to make a name for myself. I think making a name for yourself comes from your play, and personality comes afterward."

Making a name for himself hasn't been easy for Wilcox. Coming from a family rich in

football tradition, Wilcox has always felt he's had something to prove, especially in high school.

Dave Wilcox, Josh's father, played in the NFL for a decade with the San Francisco 49ers, and his brother Justin is a standout high school athlete, following in Josh's footsteps at Junction City High School.

While in high school, Josh scored 11 touchdowns offensively and added three more off interceptions as a two-way standout his senior season.

But since his arrival at Oregon, Wilcox has been able to showcase not only his football talents, but his individuality as well.

"I'm just not your average small-town boy," Wilcox said. "I just like to go out and screw around and be myself. I used to get tense and wound up. I just need to relax, and I think part of relaxing is letting my personality just flow."

"In high school, I always had a reputation to live up to. I want to be Josh Wilcox. I don't want to be Dave's son or Justin's brother."

Being Josh Wilcox is a veritable wonderland of interesting and sometimes odd idiosyncrasies. Tattoos, heavy metal and aspirations of one day taking the ring in a professional wrestling



FILE PHOTO  
Tight end Josh Wilcox has not only showcased his football talents at Oregon, but also his unique personality.

Turn to **WILCOX**, Page 6B