

Griffin Takes to the Air

The junior flanker is stepping out of the shadows and into the Ducks' offensive spotlight

By Andrea De Young
Assistant Sports Editor

Before the season even started Damon Griffin had high expectations to live up to.

The Ducks had recently lost their all-time leading receiver, Cristin McLemore, to graduation, and there was uncertainty about who could take his place.

Five games into the season, the junior flanker is making his case to become McLemore's predecessor, and it is a strong one. In his four games this season, Griffin has scored four touchdowns, including two against Arizona State last weekend. The game against the Sun Devils already ranks high on Griffin's list of most memorable games.

"The Arizona State game is the best game I've played so far in my career," he said. "I really haven't been playing much so that's going to stand-out in my mind forever."

But Griffin had more than one spectacular game. He has racked up 361 yards so far this season and not only leads the Ducks in receiving, but also ranks 26th in the nation in per-game receiving yards, averaging 90.25.

Griffin recognizes that in Oregon's style of offense, a game like his against Arizona State won't come around often.

"It's hard to have that kind of a game with all of the receivers that we have — Dameron [Ricketts] and Jibri Hodge — and the tight ends, Blake [Spence] and Josh [Wilcox]. It's hard for one receiver to have a good game because everybody gets the ball," he said.

It was even more difficult for Griffin because the team lost the game. He acknowledges that personal statistics are not as important as winning.

"It hurts. You finally have a game you've been waiting for all your life and you don't win," he said. "Yeah, I had a good game, but I didn't feel it because I was upset and frustrated about losing."

When the Ducks face UCLA this Saturday, Griffin will be playing against a team that he grew up almost around the corner from.

"UCLA was my second choice," he said. "It was a more comfortable feeling coming up here to Oregon. I wanted to have my own life. I felt I could concentrate more on school if I was away from home."

He will also be facing a former teammate in the backfield.

"The starting cornerback Andy Colbert was my quarterback in junior high school so we're really going to go at it," Griffin said.

The game will also mark the return of former Oregon offensive coordinator, Al Borges.

"I wasn't really in good with the man in the first place," Griffin said. "I didn't really like his style."

With Dirk Koetter now holding the reins of



ANDY BRACKENSICK/Emerald

“It really takes a DB's mind set away if you catch a ball and he just thrashes you and you get right back up and start talking smack right away. You've really got him in his head and once you get him in his head, it's over with for a DB.”

— Damon Griffin
UO Flanker

Damon Griffin (5) and the rest of the Oregon offense were instrumental in the 35-28 win over Colorado State. Since that game, Griffin has gained more than 250 yards and scored three touchdowns in two games.

the Oregon offense, Griffin is pleased with his style of play.

"Coach Koetter's style of offense is really my style," he said. "It's aggressive and [emphasizes the] attack. We like to put a lot of yards up. We haven't gotten into the end-zone a lot, but his style of aggressiveness is tough on DBs and good for receivers. DBs are on their toes so much, that is why we are able to put so many yards up every game."

Griffin considers himself to be on the same wave length as Koetter — playing with in-

tensity is key.

"My mind set is aggressive," he said. "I like to be aggressive. Ever since I was growing up I was always a kind of DB-type player. I didn't even play offense until my senior year. My mind set is 'I'm going to dominate whoever is in front of me.' I'm a very emotional player and I let people know that. I'll tell anybody to pick it up."

He recognizes that this is one of his assets as a player.

"My strength is my will to win. I always

want to win, I can't stand to lose. I was losing in high school all my life," Griffin said. "Since I came here I know how it feels to win. Everybody likes to win. I'll never quit and I will not let our team quit."

On the physical side, Griffin enjoys one of the hardest parts of the game — being hit.

"There really isn't a ball that I can't catch. If it's thrown to me, I'm going to catch it. I'm not scared of catching the ball in the mid-

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Young McNown finesses his way to heart of UCLA team

■ **BRUINS:** Cade McNown has earned respect from coaches and teammates alike in becoming UCLA's starting quarterback



By Brent Boyd
The Daily Bruin

Last season Cade McNown did not even appear on the UCLA depth chart. Twelve months later he holds the future of Bruin football in the palm of his hand.

Suddenly the sophomore has become the second-most-experienced member of an offense filled with question marks.

The majority of the pressure, most say, will fall on the left-hander.

McNown, however, is hearing none of it.

"I know all of a sudden people are putting a lot of weight on my shoulders," McNown said. "I don't put any pressure on myself because of other people. So, I'm not really feeling the outside pressure. I know it's there, but I choose not to listen to it."

At first glance, McNown does not appear to be the one for the Bruins to rest their hopes on. There does not seem to be any particular greatness about him.

In 1995, he completed 122-of-245 passes for 1,698 yards.

Respectable numbers, yes, but by no means remarkable.

But, numbers are not what Cade McNown is all

about.

He relies on the desire to compete, the toughness of a running back and an overall love of the game.

"He's a fierce competitor, a fierce competitor," former UCLA head coach Terry Donahue said. "I really like the way he competes."

Looking more like a linebacker than a quarterback, McNown is not afraid to get hit, or even give hits.

"If they wanted me to change positions, I probably would," he said. "It wouldn't bother me because, seriously, I love football. If I was fast enough or quick enough I would play defense — it's fun."

It's not just talk either because McNown is the club's leading returning rusher from a year ago, gaining 311 yards on the ground.

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti recognizes McNown as a running threat.

"Cade McNown is a great running quarterback, probably best when he is out on the perimeter, he'll tuck it and go at any time," Bellotti said.

Last season, McNown clinched the Bruins' win over USC with a 21-yard scamper on third-and-13, and in this year's opener against Tennessee, McNown on numerous occasions turned potential

sacks into first-down gains.

"During the game, he ad-libs," Donahue said. "He has a good ability to take something that's a disaster and turn it into something positive."

"It's obvious that he loves the game," offensive coordinator Al Borges said. "All he really wants to do is be around it all of the time. It's probably overkill, which for a coach is kind of nice. He has a great thirst for knowledge."

As soon as McNown committed to UCLA, he called then-offensive coordinator Bob Toledo and requested a play book in order to study it during the off-season. Those were the intangibles that enabled McNown to become a leader on the club, despite his youth.

"I think he's won a vote of confidence with the rest of the players," Borges said. "I think because of that, it reflects his attitude with the rest of the team. There's a lot to be said for leading by example, not necessarily cheerleading. I think he's done that."

"All my life, I've done things like being a team captain or a leader of a football team," McNown said. "Being a young QB can be a really tough thing because 75 to 80 percent of the team was here before

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