

Sigh of relief heard as quarterback returns to field

■ **COMEBACK:** Four and a half games after going down with a knee injury, Tony Graziani makes his return

By Andrea De Young
Assistant Sports Editor

It's homecoming in more ways than one for Tony Graziani.

The senior quarterback returns to Northern California to play in a stadium an hour and a half from his hometown.

He returns to his home, back on the field behind the offensive line.

He is back as the team leader, both in spirit and in running the offense.

The most important part is that he's back. Graziani has been declared the starter for Saturday's game against Stanford after sitting out the past four and a half games. A medial collateral ligament injury on his right knee sent Graziani tumbling to the turf against Nevada, and his estimated return was four to six weeks later.

Five weeks and many hours in the Casanova Center treatment room later, Graziani is healthy. He has been practicing for three weeks and was dressed for both the Arizona

State and UCLA games.

"Sitting on the sidelines watching everybody — that's the hardest part," Graziani said. "It's been tough watching them struggle in the last three weeks. You want to be out there and you want to help them out as much as you can, but you know you have no part in the game."

But Graziani admits it was more difficult to be in pads for the past two games than it was to be in street clothes for the other games.

"Saturday was tough because there might have been a chance that I would have gone in," he said. "Against Arizona State I knew I wasn't going to go in, but I just went down for moral support or in case both [Ryan Perry-Smith and Jason Maas] went down. But last week was kind of hard because there was a question about whether or not I was going in."

There doesn't seem to be any question for the Stanford game, though, as long as Graziani feels healthy.

"Based on what I saw, if he continues to practice like the way he did [Tuesday] and he has no setbacks, he will start," head coach Mike Bellotti said on Wednesday.

Graziani has proved himself ever since he took over the starting role with the gradu-

ation of Danny O'Neil. In 11 games last season, he completed 231-of-426 passes for 2604 yards and 13 touchdowns. He ranked eighth in the nation in total offense at season's end.

In his six quarters of play this season, Graziani threw 59 passes, completing 33, for 543 yards, three touchdowns and no interceptions. He was also instrumental in Oregon's comeback against Fresno State when the Ducks tied the game in the last seconds of the fourth quarter to send it to overtime. Oregon won the game thanks to Graziani's first pass in overtime to tight end Josh Wilcox in the endzone.

With the Ducks struggling in the past three games, Graziani may be the spark needed to ignite a fire. But he will be coming back to a team that looks drastically different than the last time he was on the field. Injuries have forced receivers and running backs to sit. The lack of depth at tailback, especially, is continually presenting a problem for the offense.

"It's tough," Graziani said. "We're a little thin right now. We've got a lot of key players out and hopefully we can just step up, and some of the young guys can come in and play real well."

There is also the concern of the mental aspect of the first game back after an injury. But Graziani said it won't take long before all bad thoughts are out of his mind.

"I think I will be nervous until the first play is done," he said. "It's always tough to get back into game speed, so I think I just have to take it easy until then."

But being so close to home will help Graziani deal with a hostile road crowd.

"I'll have a lot of friends and family down there. I don't think it'll be any worries getting pumped up," he said.

With Graziani back into the starter's position, Perry-Smith resumes his role as the backup. Although he jumped into the No. 2 spot for all-time Oregon single-game passing yards with a 468-yard game against Arizona State, the Ducks' 1-3 record since Graziani went down was not enough for Perry-Smith to keep the starting job.

But both Bellotti and Graziani were pleased with Perry-Smith's accomplishments, and Graziani said he knows his first goal for Saturday's game.

"Being consistent. I think that was one of those things that Ryan did real well," he said. "Hopefully I can do that for a whole game so we can win."

Jordan: Leadership role suits the linebacker

■ **Continued from Page 2B**

been called on to carry quite a load as a veteran on a young and inexperienced defensive squad. All the while, he has been suffering through nagging injuries himself — injuries that have plagued him his whole career.

"What I tell the young guys," Jordan said, "is that we're in a little bit of a rut right now, but go out and have fun and don't get uptight because when that happens you miss plays."

But even with that positive outlook, Jordan broke down last week after Oregon's loss to UCLA and was visibly emotional talking to reporters afterward.

"It was just frustration and disappointment," Jordan said. "We came into the season with such high hopes. Not to play up to our abilities is a little disappointing."

Not to mention the fact that this is Jordan's last year. In fact, he has already earned his degree in English literature and is an intern at Marist High School with aspirations of becoming a teacher. And a trip to a bowl game would be the perfect senior season for Jordan.

"These are your lasting memories," he said. "You just want to go out on top. To lose three in a row is devastating."

But all is not yet lost for the Ducks. With some injured starters slowly making their way back into the line-up and a couple of by-weeks coming up, Oregon's bowl game picture could start to clear up.

"Reggie has never been completely healthy in his career," Bellotti said. "We need to get him healthy, obviously. We also need to get an influx of healthy bodies on the defense to support guys like Reggie."

Until then, Jordan is accepting of his role in the defense, a role that includes being a leader.

"The young guys look up to me and expect me to be a leader," he said. "They're taking some knocks this year, but these kids, come their junior or sophomore years, whew. ... It's real encouraging. They make plays, but it's just not all the plays."

Part of being a leader includes keeping the team focused, and in some cases, keeping first-year

players from being too star struck out on the field.

In the game against Washington State earlier this season, true freshman safety Ray Brust was seeing his first significant playing time and, Jordan said, was a little in awe of his environment.

"I looked in the huddle," Jordan said, "and thought that Brust was going to choke on his mouthpiece. He looked like he was in a different world. I told him to relax a little bit and to calm down."

Barnes, who is known for his leadership qualities, recognizes the same in Jordan.

"He is pretty good with the guys," Barnes said. "He helps them understand what it takes to play at this level, even academically."

It is this leading by example that stands out in Bellotti's mind.

"He had surgery on his ankle before the season but has been able to fight through it," he said. "He is a leader out there on the field and is not afraid to say some things."

And knowing the nature of Jordan, when he is on the field his voice can be heard loud and clear.

PAC-10 notebook

By Chris Hansen
Sports Reporter

■ Arizona State's offense has been perfect inside the redzone this season. Seventeen times the Sun Devils have been inside the opponents 20-yard line and 17 times they have scored, including converting on all five opportunities against Oregon and Washington. Fourteen of those scores were for touchdowns.

■ UCLA's next three foes (Arizona State, 5-0, Washington, 3-1 and California, 5-0) have a combined record of 13-1 and all are ranked in this week's Top 25. The Bruins' schedule

has been ranked as the toughest in the Pac-10 and No. 14 in the country by the NCAA News. UCLA has, or will play, six teams that participated in 1995 bowl games.

■ Other than defensive end Kailee Wong, Stanford has one more player with an Oregon connection: offensive guard Brad Badger. A graduate of Corvallis High School, Badger was a consensus pre-season First-Team All-Pac-10 selection. Oregon center Mark Gregg and cornerback LaMont Woods also graduated from Corvallis.

■ Saturday's Washington-Notre Dame matchup marks only the fourth time these teams have faced each other. Notre Dame leads the series 3-0 including a 29-21 win last season at Husky Stadium.

McTyre: Graziani has a history of putting together big-game heroics

■ **Continued from Page 1B**

By the beginning of the fourth quarter, Hicks had done his job and the Bruins were able to coast home from there leaving the Ducks down and out.

"When you live by the sword, you die by the sword," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said following the game. "If you're going to commit to the passing game, you commit to it. We need to be better running the ball. But when it went from 7-7 at halftime in a heartbeat and then 31-7 before you knew it, we needed to do whatever we could to get down the field and score some points. You have to be able to run it when everybody knows you're going to run it in order to be successful in this league."

But now, one week later, the Ducks have something to look forward to. Something that might leave the last three games in the past, where they should be, and possibly salvage the season. The return of quarterback Tony Graziani.

Graziani went down to a knee injury in the Ducks' second game of the season and was replaced by Ryan Perry-Smith, who played well during his starting stint, but only posted a 1-3 record.

There's no doubt that the pressure put upon Graziani to succeed this weekend must be tremendous. But of anybody on the

Ducks' squad, the senior is unquestionably the best fit for this type of situation.

Two years ago, Graziani started his first collegiate game against Southern California, and came away victorious in the Pacific-10 Conference's biggest upset of the 1994 season. Last year, in a game that is always up for grabs — Civil War — Graziani again showed poise. His passing was off that night at Autzen Stadium, but he let his legs do the talking as he gained a team-leading 108 yards in Oregon's 12-10 win over Oregon State.


While he may not be able to bring the Ducks totally out of their downward spiral because of the massive injured list Oregon must endure, he does add more ability and experience to the quarterback position. As a starter of games he has finished, Graziani holds a 9-3 mark. Added to an outstanding record, he is the only quarterback in school history to have accumulated victories over USC, UCLA, Washington and Arizona.

Don't expect miracles Saturday, but expect the toughness and competitive side of Graziani to show through.

Mark McTyre is the sports editor for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.



Authentic Chinese Cuisine
RESTAURANT & LOUNGE
947 Franklin Blvd.
343-4480



Twilight Dinners
available every night for
only \$ 9.95

* Extensive lounge menu
* Satellite TV for your
favorite sports events
* Dinners from just \$7.95,
a la carte

22 CLUB ROAD 343-5622

NORTH BANK
RESTAURANT & LOUNGE