

OFFENSIVE LINE



Lee Gundy (from left), Marco Aguirre, Michael Klews and Seaton Daly try to overcome youth and inexperience in 1997. CHAD PATTESON/Emerald

Youth is served up front for Ducks

Only one regular starter returns to help lead a young and inexperienced offensive line in 1997

By Alex Pond
Sports Reporter

Take an 18-year-old true freshman and start him at right guard in the first game of the season. Throw in a junior-college transfer at left tackle. Add three more players who have started a total of one game prior to 1997, a preseason injury to the only returning regular starter, and what have you got?

A young and inexperienced offensive line thrown into the raging fire called the Pacific-10 Conference season.

Replacing one of the more experienced and successful offensive lines in school history is perhaps the most inexperienced line to ever start the season for the Ducks.

Lee Gundy, the true freshman, and junior-college transfer Marco Aguirre saw their first action as Ducks in the first game of the season. Senior Seaton Daly, junior Stefan deVries and junior Michael Klews were the other opening-night starters on the line.

Oregon passed the season-opening test with a 16-9 home victory over Arizona, but offensive line coach Neal Zoumboukos was not satisfied with the front five's play.

"I thought that we played too high overall, and you can't do that on the offensive line," Zoumboukos says. "Assignment-wise we did a good job in blocking the right people for the most part, but technically we were not very sound."

"Even the guys who had experience made those mistakes. That did not please me at all."

However, what has pleased Zoumboukos since the beginning of fall camp is the effort his players have put forth.

"I have no complaints about effort 99 percent of the time," he says. "I love the effort but I'm not happy with the fundamental execution. It's not something that's going to happen in a day. It's going to take time. The plight of the offensive lineman is repetition, and we need a lot of repetition."

Coming into camp, the Ducks knew they would be inexperienced up front, but injuries to senior David Weber and junior Chad Normoyle forced them to go even younger.

Weber started every game at right tackle for the Ducks in 1996, but an ankle injury during fall camp left him sidelined for the early part of this season.

"It's as bad as it gets, personally, to miss the first game and to battle an injury the whole season," Weber says. "But it's just something I have to overcome and support my teammates while I'm out."

The most inexperienced player to receive early season playing time on the line was Gundy, who accomplished the rare feat of starting the first game of the season as a true freshman.

"There was a lot of excitement," he says. "I was a lit-

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