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Football: Ducks need win against UCLA to keep bowl hopes alive

Continued from Page 7

matchup against UCLA has now become a pivotal midseason conference game for Oregon.

A loss will put the Ducks at 1-3 in the Pacific-10 Conference and 3-3 overall. To get to a bowl game this season, Oregon will probably have to finish at 7-4 overall. With road games at Washington, Southern California and defending Pac-10 champs Arizona State, as well as the Civil War game at home against a much improved Oregon State squad, it's hard to imagine the Ducks going 4-1 after this weekend.

A win, on the other hand, will put the Ducks right where they want to be - in a position where a couple of losses won't necessarily kill their post-season chances.

Betting odds and pundits aside, the only thing Oregon has proven in the last two games is that it has as good a chance to win as it does to lose against the Bruins.

When clicking on offense, as they were against Stanford two weeks ago, the Ducks are a threat to score on every possession.

And when the Oregon defense is playing up to its potential, it is capable of stopping any offense in the conference, no matter how

"We talked a lot about the fact that you never know what plays can and can't make a difference ... Great teams find ways to be opportunistic."

Mike Bellotti
UO Head Football Coach

powerful or potent.

But the problem with the Ducks, as they have also proven in the last two games, is that they have not been able to get both sides of the ball to click in the same game.

"We have played alternately this year, great special teams, great defense, great offense," Bellotti said. "We have to put all three together. We are not a good enough football team to play on one cylinder. We need at least two and probably three, especially with the level of competition we're playing right now."

In the games against No. 15

Washington State and No. 22 Stanford, the Ducks also showed they were susceptible to sloppy, undisciplined play that cost them chance after chance to win. Against the Cougars, Oregon failed to put points on the board when it was in scoring territory.

"We talked a lot about the fact that you never know what plays can and can't make a difference," Bellotti said. "So you have to take advantage of every opportunity that you get, whether it's offensively or defensively. Great teams find ways to be opportunistic. Certainly, [the Washington State game] was very winnable for us, but, unfortunately, we didn't make the plays on either side of the football."

Making the plays that matter is what will get Oregon past a UCLA team that has scored 66 points in a game twice in the last three weeks.

"Our players realize that when they are challenged, they can respond," Bellotti said. "So we just have to stick together and make some plays. But there's not a sense of desperation."

A loss against the Bruins come Saturday, and there just might be.

Hood: UW's Huard, UCLA's Hicks, and Cal's Shaw are all contenders for Heisman

Continued from Page 7

ceiving have established him as a multi-talented threat at tailback. Hicks' 13 total touchdowns lead the Bruins, the nation's second highest scoring offense, at 46 points per game.

With all due respect to Marshall's Randy Moss, California's Bobby Shaw is college football's most polished receiver. Shaw's receiving numbers through four games are so incredible, they may single-handedly return the Bears to a bowl game.

Shaw ranks third in the country in receptions (33) and fourth in yards per game (145.25). According to his coaches and teammates, Shaw is the consummate team player. He runs quick, precise routes and never gives up on a play. Shaw has made California's junior quarterback Justin Vedder into one of the Pac-10's most prolific passers.

These four players are considered "Dark Horses"

to win the Heisman by the national media, but if Washington State, Washington and UCLA continue to climb in the Associated Press Top-25, look for these names to be talked about more seriously in December.

Joel Hood is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

Corrections

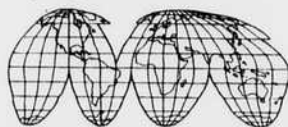
Monday's *Emerald* should have said that Saladin McCullough had 83 yards rushing against Washington State, and that Cougar defensive tackle Gary Holmes forced a fumble. The *Emerald* regrets these errors.

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