

# OREGON FOOTBALL

## Loss: Defense can't stop run, offense held to seven second-half points

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ton State and Tennessee.

Oregon led 21-10 early in the first quarter and 24-20 at the halfway mark, but was only able to muster one second-half score as the Bruins ran off 19 unanswered points starting in the third quarter.

As has been the case with the Ducks in their current three-game skid, the loss did not come from lack of opportunity. A missed field-goal attempt by Joshua Smith, a dropped first-down pass at the UCLA 25-yard line by A.J. Jelks and numerous big plays given up by the Oregon defense all factored heavily into the outcome.

"Again we had opportunities similar to last weekend, and we didn't take advantage of them," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "We had a series on defense where we forgot how to tackle. When that happens, you lose the battle at the line of scrimmage."

The series that Bellotti referred to occurred in the fourth quarter with the Bruins leading 27-24. UCLA started the drive on its own 16-yard line, but after runs of 21 and 26 yards by Jermaine Lewis and a screen pass to receiver Jim McElroy that resulted in a 30-yard gain, the Bruins punched it in for the score. They missed the point after but still led by nine with just under eight minutes to play.

The Oregon defense allowed 265 yards rushing, including runs of 42 yards by Skip Hicks, 43 yards by Keith Brown and Lewis' two 20-plus runs.

Hicks had 90 yards rushing in the first half, but did not play after halftime with what was being described as a bruised right knee.

"We're just not making plays when we have to," said linebacker Peter Sirmon, who led both teams with 11 tackles. "Every game we've had the opportunity to make plays when it's crucial that we make them, and so far we're 0-3. It's a little disheartening."

The Oregon offense didn't fare too well in the second half either, being shut out until the final minute of the game.

Akili Smith started at quarterback and played the entire game up until the seven-minute mark of the fourth quarter when he was replaced by Jason Maas. As effective as Smith was in the first half, leading the Ducks on scoring drives of 65, 80 and 40 yards, he was equally ineffective in the second.

Part of that came from a sore throwing shoulder he suffered after a tackle in the first half. Smith finished the day 16 for 23, 159 yards, one interception, one touchdown run and 67 yards rushing.

Another part of the problem was a UCLA defense that limited the Ducks to 151 yards of total offense in the second half.

"They made some adjustments that we didn't pick up on," a visibly frustrated Bellotti said. "They had a couple of stunts that we didn't pick up on, which allowed UCLA to get to [Saladin McCullough] before he could get started."

McCullough was limited to nine carries and 22 yards in the second half after rushing for 111 yards on 11 carries in the first. One of those first-half carries was a 71-yard touchdown burst through the middle of the line that gave Oregon a 14-10 first-quarter lead.

On the following Bruin posses-

sion, Brandon McLemore sacked and stripped UCLA quarterback Cade McNown of the football on the Bruin 14-yard line, and Michael Fletcher picked up the ball and ran it in for the touchdown to put Oregon up by 11.

UCLA scored on its next drive on a 10-yard scramble by McNown that was set up by Brown's 43-yard run.

UCLA jumped ahead of Oregon for good on its second drive of the third quarter. McNown, who finished the game 15 for 25 for 248 yards one interception and scored two rushing touchdowns, executed a play-action pass to perfection and found McElroy wide open in the end zone for a 40-yard touchdown pass.

Oregon would be in position to score again, but on third and 11 from the UCLA 34, Smith's pass to Jelks was too low for the Oregon tight end, who was wide open for the first down and probably 10-15 yards more.

"I just dropped it," a dejected Jelks said. "I took my eyes off it and thought about running too soon. I feel that is one of the reasons that we lost the game."

Jelks would somewhat redeem himself, though, catching a touchdown pass from Maas with 47 seconds remaining in the game.

"We need to finish plays and finish games," Bellotti said. "I can't overemphasize that enough. For the second week in a row we had a tremendous opportunity, and we let it slip away. I think [the players] are upset, and I think they are mad. Unfortunately, the team that beat us probably resides in this locker room."

For the second week in a row.

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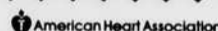
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