

Toledo pleased with UCLA defense

The Bruins' defense has allowed just 81 points in its last five games

By John Nadel
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Even though the UCLA Bruins moved into first place in the country in scoring over the weekend, coach Bob Toledo focused most of his attention on his team's defense Monday.

All things considered, it was easy to understand why.

"They've played as well as I ever could have expected them to at this point," Toledo said of the defense at his weekly meeting with reporters. "I'm very pleased. I don't know if surprised is the word, maybe it is."

"They're playing hard, they're playing with a lot of confidence, they're [causing turnovers]. These guys have really responded. They're overachieving."

Toledo made his remarks two days after the Bruins beat Oregon State 34-10. The Beavers scored their only touchdown with 1:09 remaining.

The 13th-ranked Bruins (5-2, 3-1 Pac-10) have allowed only 47 points in the second halves of their seven games, and just 81 points in their last five games — all wins. They gave up 67 in the first two games — both losses.

Not only that, the Bruins lead the country in turnover margin — the defense has forced 30, leading to 15 touchdowns and five field goals — while the offense has committed only 12.

Before the season began, Toledo made no secret that defense was his main concern. Led by

quarterback Cade McNown, tailback Skip Hicks and an experienced line, he was confident the offense would be just fine, and it has been — the Bruins are averaging 43.3 points.

The defense, which allowed an average of just under 29 points per game last season, was another story.

"We were concerned because of the front people and inexperience on the corner," Toledo said.

The concerns certainly seemed valid during UCLA's 37-34 loss to No. 10 Washington State in the season-opener. The Bruins were then beaten 30-24 by No. 8 Tennessee, but the Peyton Manning-led Volunteers were held without a touchdown in the second half.

Toledo pointed to that performance as a turning point.

"By coming back against Tennessee the way we did, it gave us hope, it gave us confidence," he said.

Toledo said his defensive players and coaches have done an excellent job of making adjustments at halftime.

"You don't go in and change everything," he said. "You make subtle adjustments. That's what we're doing. Our kids are really doing a good job of making those adjustments and carrying them out."

At least two defensive starters are pleased with the attention their unit is receiving.

"It is nice," rover Wasswa Serwanga said. "The defense is playing real well right now. And we're still making mistakes. We have

yet to play to our potential as a defense."

Maybe so, but Serwanga also said, "Our defense can turn an offense into three-and-out real quick."

Outside linebacker Brendon Ayanbadejo said he believes the defense is starting to get the respect it deserves.

"That's a good feeling," he said with a smile when asked about the increased attention. "I know we're a whole lot better than we were [against Washington State]. I just wish we could have that game back."

"We have the athletic ability and the talent to be very successful. Our overall goal is to be the best defense in the conference. Statistically, we're not there. But we're getting better every week."

The Bruins got for their sixth straight victory against California on Saturday at the Rose Bowl. The Golden Bears (2-4, 0-3) bring a four-game losing streak into UCLA's homecoming game.

"Each week, the game is bigger," Toledo said. "Our big thing right now is we need to focus on ourselves. We don't want to lose football games, we want to make people have to beat us."

Toledo said the status of Hicks, UCLA's leading rusher, is day-to-day. Hicks hasn't played in the second half of his team's last two games because of a bruised right knee.

"The knee didn't respond well as the [Oregon State] game went on," Toledo said. "He wasn't running as hard as he needs to run."

Hicks gained 39 yards on nine carries against Oregon State and failed to score a touchdown for the first time in 15 games.



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Heaston opts not to play football

Liz Heaston, the first woman to play in a college football game, says soccer and her studies come first

By Julie Finnin Day
The Associated Press

PORTLAND — Liz Heaston, the first woman to play in a college football game, wouldn't mind helping out the guys at Willamette University again.

But right now, she would rather focus on soccer and her studies.

The 5-foot-5, 120-pound woman kicked her way into the history books Saturday by scoring two extra points as Willamette defeated Linfield College 27-0.

"She was a natural," football coach Dan Hawkins said.

On Sunday, Heaston was back in her role as star defender on the women's soccer team, which is ranked 14th nationally in the NAIA. With her help, the Salem-based Bearcats held off Pacific Lutheran 3-2.

And on Monday morning, she appeared on the national TV shows NBC's "Today" and CBS' "This Morning." Then it was off to a full day of classes for the 20-year-old biology major.

"I was out there to have fun and do my job on the field for the team," the junior from Richland, Wash., said. "That was enough for me."

Hawkins said he has received e-mail from around the country thanking him for putting Heaston in the game. But with the starting kicker returning from an injury and Heaston's schedule in school and on the

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime shot, but I've got to take care of soccer now."

Liz Heaston
Kicker for Willamette University

soccer team, she's unlikely to play football again anytime soon.

"She still wants to be part of the team, and I'm totally good with that," Hawkins said. "Our schedules just don't jibe."

The milestone Saturday had long been anticipated. Women at Duke and Louisville had come close to playing football, but never got into a game.

Arleigh Dodson, commissioner of the Northwest Conference of which Willamette is a member, said he supports women playing in men's football games "as long as the safety and training are there."

Noting several Northwest women's rugby and lacrosse teams, Dodson said he sees interest growing in some contact sports.

"Women are going to go the way they want to go, but right now I don't sense any big push for women to play football," he said.

Meanwhile, Heaston's focus has returned to a test later this week and her other sport.

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime shot," she said, "but I've got to take care of soccer now."

Leaf named Pac-10 offensive player of the week

WSU's Ryan Leaf passed for 332 yards and had five touchdown passes in win over California

The Associated Press

WALNUT CREEK, Calif. — Quarterback Ryan Leaf, whose five touchdown passes helped Washington State rout California, has been named the Pacific-10 player of the week on offense.

In just two and a half quarters, Leaf completed 13 of 21 passes for 332 yards and no interceptions in Washington State's 63-37 victory Saturday.

Leaf's five touchdown passes tied the Cougars' single-game record. Washington State is 6-0 and has won all four of its league games.

Arizona State linebacker Pat Tillman was named the confer-

ence's top defensive player. Tillman had 11 tackles, caused one fumble and intercepted one pass to help the Sun Devils' 31-14 upset of Stanford.

USC's Adam Abrams, who kicked the game-winning field goal at Notre Dame, is the special teams player of the week. His 37-yard field goal gave the Trojans their first victory at Notre Dame since 1981.

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