

Don't be deceived by the numbers

On paper, this one's a no brainer. Looking at the numbers, you might as well send the redshirts and walk-ons up to play the Huskies to save your starters from injury.

This season, the Huskies — surprise, surprise — are the cream of the Pacific-10 Conference's crop.

They are to the top of Pac-10 what the Ducks are to mediocrity — closely related.

Washington has yet to lose in Pac-10 play and has lost just one game all season, to now-No. 1 Nebraska on Sept. 20.

The Huskies have won 12 straight Pac-10 games and are in the top 20 in the nation in every major category except rushing and passing offense, despite the fact their starting quarterback leads the nation in passing efficiency.

They are outscoring their opponents by more than 25 points per game in their wins and have turned the ball over only nine times.

Last week against Southern California, they dismantled the Trojans, never allowing them in a game that wasn't as close as the final score indicated.

The Huskies are playing like ... well, like the Huskies always do.

On the Ducks side, almost everything can, and should, be better.

Oregon, especially its defense, has been spectacular at times and appalling at others.

The Ducks have had more ups and downs than the Empire State Building elevator.

In a telling example, they were up when they stuffed the Southern California defense in the second half, allowing just three second-half points.

Then they were right back down when a last-second, game-winning field-goal attempt fell just short.

They rank in the bottom three of the conference in every defensive category, including dead last in rushing defense and total defense.

They have lost their last four games in conference play and their only win to break up a five-game losing streak was a homecoming win over nonconference foe Utah.

On paper, these two teams are headed in complete opposite directions.

But, for a second, hell, for a week, forget all that stuff.

Forget that the Ducks are mired in another terrible slump and that the Huskies are playing like the national title contenders they are.

Look at what counts right now.

Look at the Ducks defense in second half of the last two games.

Oregon may be playing like a team out of the Big Sky, with its powerful offense and lack of defense, but look at what it did against the Utes and Trojans. The Ducks held Utah and USC to a combined three points and 319 yards in total offense in the second half, a drastic improvement for a defense that is allowing 432 yards a game.

Think about the bye week.

Not only did Oregon get an extra week to channel the motivation of the gut-wrenching two-point loss to USC toward its preparation for Washington, but its front seven also got the rest it needed to get healthy again.

With the return of defensive lineman Desmond Byrd and inside linebacker Ryan Klaasen, Oregon has the final cogs healthy needed to stop the always potent Husky rushing attack.

Let's not forget that last season, after a five-game losing streak, the Ducks came back from a bye week to win their final three games to salvage what looked to be a horrendous season.

Look back to 1995.

Talk about parallels. In 1995, the Ducks were coming off a demoralizing 35-24 loss to Arizona State at home and were heading to Washington for what appeared to be sheer doom at the hands of the Huskies. But

OREGON FEATURE

"He's done just an excellent job. He does everything we ask of him."

Mike Bellotti
Oregon head coach



MICHAEL CRISP/Emerald

Sirmon had nine tackles, two for a loss, against Fresno State earlier this season. Sirmon has been the Ducks' steady influence in the defensive front seven and leads the conference in tackles with 73.

Tackling Fancy

By CHRIS HANSEN
Assistant Sports Editor

It's a homecoming of sorts for inside linebacker Peter Sirmon this weekend. The sophomore from Walla Walla, Wash., grew up watching the Washington Huskies and while he wouldn't say it was exactly his dream to play for the Huskies, he certainly would have.

Recruited by Jim Lambright, a former Washington teammate of Sirmon's father, Gary, in the mid-60s, Sirmon says he was told by the head coach he had a 99 percent chance of being offered a scholarship.

He wasn't.

Washington native Peter Sirmon will play a Husky team that he grew up watching

"For what ever reason it didn't happen," Sirmon says. "They had 15 scholarships to offer, but I guess I was a bubble guy."

Any remorse?

"I hate 'em," Sirmon says without hesitation.

No doubt Lambright doesn't feel too good about his decision to pass over Sirmon either. After eight games this season, Sirmon leads the Pacific-10 Conference with 73 tackles and is sec-

ond with 15 tackles for a loss.

"I've known his family for a long time so it's great to see his success," Lambright admits. "He's big and strong and likes to get at it. He loves to

come after you and make plays in the opponent's backfield."

Which is exactly what Oregon had hoped for when it signed the 1994 Washington defensive player of the year.

The expectations placed on Sirmon are so high that after starting and leading the team in tackles as a freshman until the season's final game last year,

Turn to **SIRMON**, Page 7B

Turn to **FRANK**, Page 7B