



LAURA GOSS/Emerald

Wilcox (19) confers with McLemore during the first week of fall football practice on the new grass fields.



MCLEMORE

Brothers in arms



WILCOX

Brandon McLemore and Justin Wilcox battle each other as well as the expectations brought by having famous brothers

By Allison Ross
Freelance Reporter

If you mention the name Josh Wilcox in front of Justin Wilcox, it's all he can do to keep from rolling his eyes.

"You want to talk about my brother?" asked the 6-foot-2 junior.

Well sort of. It just so happens that Justin is competing for the free safety position on the Oregon football team with fellow junior Brandon McLemore, whose brother Cristin had a stellar 1995 season right alongside Josh. Both players traveled to the Rose Bowl in 1995 and the Cotton Bowl in 1996. Josh is currently at camp with the New Orleans Saints.

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti, who coached Wilcox and McLemore in the Cotton Bowl, now has a new generation on his hands. For the first time since they were freshman, both Brandon and Justin are healthy — and competing for the same position.

"I call that the nepotism position because those kids are ready to come outside the shadows of their older brothers and earn it," Bellotti said.

Just don't tell that to Justin. He's not here to ride the coattails of his older brother. And he's not here to prove anything.

"I didn't come here to show him up," Wilcox said. "I don't need people to tell me, 'Oh, you're finally out of his shadow.' That's not what I'm trying to do."

After all, he's got other things to worry about. Like the starting position. Knee surgery during his freshman season has kept Justin from getting the playing time needed to secure the spot. He doesn't need to talk about his brother. He needs to talk about what he, as well as his team, has to do this year.

"I think team-wise we have enough knowledge to be genuinely a really good team," Wilcox said. "I know we've said that in the past, but I think this year it's time for us to step up and be a good team, and not say, 'We should've won this, or we should've done that.'"

Wilcox, McLemore and at least 60 other Ducks are showing that

they want it this year. The energy level of the team over the summer was much different than it was last year. The victory in the 1997 Las Vegas Bowl has the players starved, not just for another bowl appearance, but another bowl victory. Thus, the team spent the summer months working out together, hanging out together and pushing each other.

"I'm very excited about this year," Bellotti said. "One, because of the commitment of the group of kids that we had from last year, their commitment this summer, their commitment to each other, the unity they've displayed."

This is the 1998 season, not 1995, and Wilcox just wants this team — a team constantly reminded of the players they lost, constantly reminded of the holes they need to fill and constantly reminded of the shadows from which they must emerge — to do well because they've earned it.

"I don't feel inferior to [Josh] because he played in the Rose Bowl and he had a great career," Wilcox said. "I want to do better because I want to do better, not because I have to do better than Josh did. I think that would be the wrong reason, so for me I just want to be great because Justin wants to be great."

On the other hand, when you mention the name Cristin McLemore to Brandon, there is almost nothing he can do to keep from smiling. He is proud to be the brother of a former Duck who shares the Oregon single-season record for touchdown receptions with 10 — a mark that had stood unmatched for 24 years. Brandon wants Cristin to know that this year Oregon is ready to take it even further.

"Between me and him, we have a little competition," Brandon said. "He just wants to see if I can attain goals that he did and go to the Rose Bowl, but you know, I could do one step better and go to the Rose Bowl and win."

To get there, McLemore must avoid injuries, which have sidelined him in both his freshman and sophomore years. He faces the same challenges Wilcox does this year. Finally recovered from

the injuries, he must now work to gain a starting position.

"I just want to stay healthy; that's my main goal," McLemore said. "I want to start every game, be healthy for every game and not get hurt."

McLemore spent the summer in Eugene to become stronger and to clinch the starting position. But this year, with Oregon focused on winning a championship and a possible game, McLemore wants what is best for the team.

"I told Coach Bellotti, even if I don't start, I'd rather have the man in front of me have more opportunities to make plays because it's hard when you rotate in and out every series," McLemore said. "You can't really get in sync."

So rather than worry about being compared to his brother, he uses his brother as an example of what he can achieve.

"I don't see it as pressure. I just see it as some goals I can attain by looking at what he's done," McLemore said.

The comparisons between the Wilcox brothers and the McLemores may seem irrelevant. Justin and Brandon are competing for a starting position on defense, while Josh and Cristin both played on offense. But similarities remain. In high school, Cristin played mostly quarterback his senior year before taking over the flanker position at Oregon. During a game against Washington State his sophomore year McLemore threw a game-clinching touchdown pass to the Oregon tight end — Josh Wilcox.

Justin, also a former quarterback, passed for more than 2,000 yards his final two years at Junction City High School. He made the switch to defense during his freshman season at Oregon.

Could it be that a Wilcox-McLemore conversion is due to reappear? Wilcox probably laughs at the idea and McLemore has probably already envisioned it. He's already envisioning a trip to the Rose Bowl, regardless of what it takes to get there.

"I just want to win the Pac-10 championship and go to the Rose Bowl and win," McLemore said.

CB Sanchez suspended for threats made to OPS

Oregon senior cornerback Davis Sanchez returned to practice Sunday, three days following his arrest after allegedly making threats in connection to some unpaid parking tickets, yet Head Coach Mike Bellotti reiterated that his status of being suspended from the squad remained unchanged.

Bellotti said that Davis' indefinite suspension would prevent him from participating in at least one game and possibly more, including the Ducks' Sept. 5 season opener

against Michigan State. The Oregon head coach added that the return of the Vancouver, B.C., native would be contingent upon Davis fulfilling conditions spelled out in a written agreement between himself and the school's second-year player.

The former Butte Junior College transfer was credited with 18 tackles and one deflected pass in eight games a year ago before suffering a season-ending ankle injury at Washington.

— UO athletic department

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