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Democrat for State Representative DISTRICT 40

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Ducks

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ries.

Latimer, starting for the fifth time in three years, faces potentially the biggest game of his ca-

"It's got to be up there," the junior said. "A lot of times I've played and had good games, but it hasn't been like the whole week I've been the starter. Someone would get hurt early in the game, and I'd have to fill in. This is probably one of the first times I've been like, OK, I've got to be ready,

because it's my show."

One key for Latimer will be to hold on to the ball, Bellotti said. Oregon lost four of its six fumbles against the Bruins, five of those by tailbacks.

"We do a lot of ball protection drills which require the back to take the ball and go fight for yardage, yet protect the ball at the same time," Bellotti said. "We work on those things every day, and we'll just add emphasis."

The Ducks enter Saturday's game having not beaten USC at

home since 1987. Last season, the Trojans won 24-22 in Los Angeles. Oregon recovered from an 18point deficit at halftime only to lose the game on a missed 36-yard field-goal try in the game's final moments.

That loss was one of the motivating factors in Oregon's recruiting of Nathan Villegas, who enters this weekend a perfect 11 of 11 on field goals. Add to that his 36 of 36 accuracy on extra points, and Villegas has been flawless this season.

USC

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Wideouts R. Jay Soward and Billy Miller both have caught 23 passes, although Soward has missed one game because of injury. A threat no matter where and when he touches the ball, Soward ranks third in the conference in all-purpose yardage per game and fourth in scoring per game.

"You hope he misses the bus or the plane," Bellotti said of Soward. "Then you figure out ways to not allow him to touch the football."

The Trojan defense is ranked third in the Pac-10. Linebacker Chris Claiborne, a Butkus Award candidate, does it all, having nabbed four interceptions in addition to his team-leading 59 tackles. Cornerback Daylon McCutcheon is regarded as one of the best cover men in the Pac-10.

"USC is the best defense right now in the conference," Bellotti said. "They have maybe the best accumulation of athletic ability and talent of anybody we'll play this year."

Hackett said his team will have to be on top of its game to upset the Ducks.

"We have to go up and play against what I think is the best team in the conference," Hackett said. "To me, this is the team to beat. Unfortunately, we have to play them in their backyard on their Homecoming weekend. We've got ourselves a serious challenge, but I think we're up to it."

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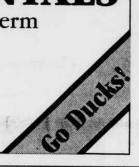
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