

UO defense plots revenge

■ Arizona's Trung Canidate attempts to burn Oregon again after an 180-yard performance last season

By Brett Williams
Oregon Daily Emerald

Dangerous doesn't even describe Arizona running back Trung Canidate.

Lethal is a more accurate description.

Canidate left wounded Ducks in his path in Arizona's 38-3 win in Tucson, Ariz., last season. A repeat performance by Canidate — he rushed for 180 yards and a touchdown — could put Oregon out of bowl contention.

The Ducks need a better effort in order to slow Canidate and leave the desert with a win, according to Oregon safety Brandon McLemore.

"I felt like last year we played a half of football, and this year we plan to play a whole game," McLemore said. "He's a solid back, he runs hard and he's a good cut-back runner."

Oregon defensive tackle Caleb Smith respects Canidate's running skills.

"He's a hard runner and he's fast, so that combination can be deadly if you can't contain it," Smith said.

Texas-El Paso found out about Canidate's skills the hard way. Canidate — who is just that for the Heisman Trophy and Doak Walker Award — burned the Miners for 202 yards on 22 carries, seventh on Arizona's all-time single-game rushing list. Canidate had the best performance by a running back in Wildcats' history last season when he abused Arizona State for 288 yards rushing.

Oregon linebacker Peter Sirmon, who's among the Pacific-10

Conference leaders in tackles, understands the threat Canidate presents to opposing defenses.

"He's fast, he breaks tackles and he cuts back against the grain and against the pursuit," Sirmon said. "He can go anywhere on the field when the ball is in his hands."

Arizona head coach Dick Tomey said his offensive line has vastly improved since its opener against Penn State, when the Wildcat line had difficulty opening holes for Canidate.

"We've made some progress, and I think its attributable to the fact that we've had the same six guys doing most of the playing for seven games," Tomey said in a released statement. "We are much different than we were seven games ago."

Tomey admires his running back's play.

"His standards are real high," Tomey said. "He's done a phenomenal job, and he's made some tough runs."

Last season's Pac-10 rushing champion with an average of almost 111 yards per game, Canidate has some stiff competition in Corvallis this season. The Beavers' Ken Simonton is averaging nearly 151 yards per game compared with Canidate's 124, despite the fact that Canidate is averaging a yard more per carry than Simonton.

Anyway you slice it, Canidate and Simonton are the two premier running backs in the Pac-10.

"Him and Simonton, those are some real good backs," McLemore said. "Canidate is one of the best running backs we'll face this year. We just know we have to focus on what we want to do."

Duck rover Michael Fletcher agreed that Canidate is one of the best running backs in the conference.

"He's a great football player,

probably the best in the Pac-10," Fletcher said. "He's been picking it up the last four games for them."

"We've got to be able to stop him and hold up the point of attack on the defensive line and get the 'backers and the safeties scrapping."

Oregon defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti confronts the problem of stopping Canidate by using the same philosophy his defense uses every game.

"We have to stop the run, which is always our goal," Aliotti said.



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