

Oregon

Continued from Page 2B

Regardless of the friendly setting — a festive homecoming atmosphere and the undoubtedly warm reception that the Ducks are sure to receive — Arizona State is no easy first step.

Oregon managed to slip past an explosive Arizona team last week despite giving up a few big plays.

Now the Ducks must again contain several similarly high-caliber athletes.

"We knew going into the Arizona game that they had some tremendous offensive weapons," Bellotti said. "The scary thing is that [Sun Devils'] players like [tailback] J.R. Redmond, [tight end] Todd Heap, and [wide receiver] Tariq McDonald all have similar big-play capabilities.

"So we have to be on as a defensive unit. All 11 guys have to play hard, play with purpose and play with great emotion because we don't want to give up big plays."

Meanwhile the Ducks are hoping for some big-time play of their own.

They certainly got it in Arizona. Tailback Reuben Droughns, having recently recovered from a rib injury, was the pillar of Oregon's offensive attack against the Wildcats.

The senior turned in a performance beyond any expectations, rushing for 202 yards while setting a school record with 45 carries.

"I didn't go in thinking he would run 45 times," Bellotti said. "It just sort of accumulated. Our goal is to have our tailback carry the ball 20 or 25 times a game and touch it a variety of other ways

about five or 10 times. That was a little out of the ordinary.

"Is it gonna happen again? It certainly may. I don't expect him those circumstances arise through the course of a game. Never say never."

And expect the unexpected.

Last week sophomore quarterback Joey Harrington stepped in and provided a surprising spark.

He replaced starter A.J. Feeley early in the third quarter, and completed six-of-11 passes for 144 yards and one touchdown.


While Harrington's performance earned him plenty of praise, it did nothing to alter Oregon's usual starting lineup. Bellotti made that clear Sunday, assuring the public that Feeley would assume his starting role again against Arizona State.

"I've established myself," Feeley said. "It's not like the first half of the season when I haven't played well. We're in the seventh game here, and I think I've established myself in the Pac-10 as well as in all of college football."

Indeed, even with a couple of shaky performances of late, Feeley is still the second leading passer in the conference. His 257 passing yards per game trails only Oregon State's Jonathan Smith, who's averaging 275 yards per game.

So, more likely than not, it will be Feeley looking to connect with Hartley as the senior receiver closes in on Oregon's career records in touchdowns and receiving yards. Hartley needs two touchdowns and 131 yards to equal Cristin McLemore's marks of 24 and 2,498.

"I know I can accomplish it," Hartley said. "[The records] are getting close, of course I think about it. They'll be nice to have."



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