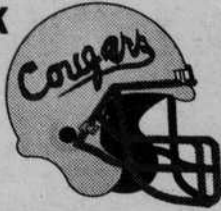


Picking up the slack



Despite absences, the UO secondary has done well.
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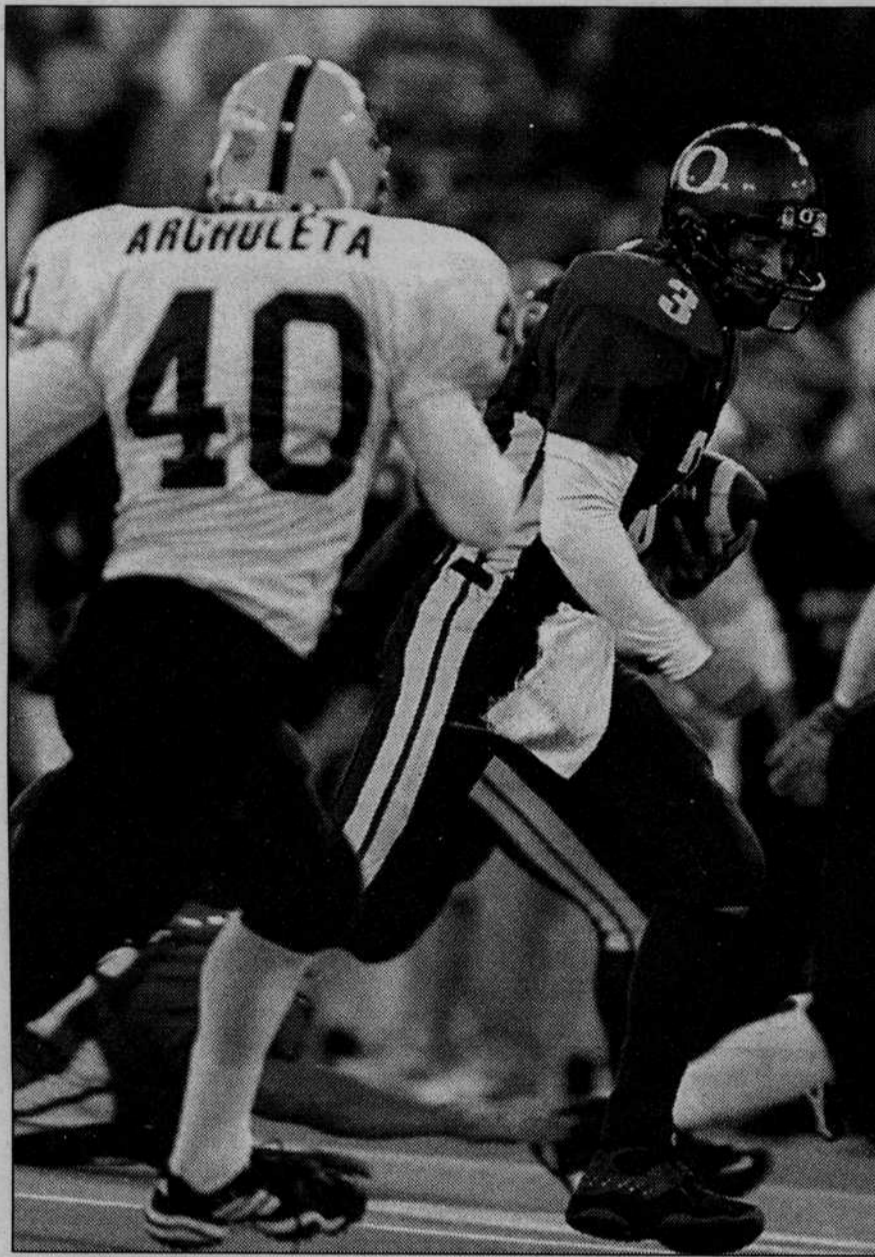


Washington State vs. Oregon Ducks

Game Day



7:15 p.m.
Saturday
at Autzen Stadium



Scott Barnett Emerald

After leading the Ducks to consecutive comeback wins, sophomore Joey Harrington could get his first collegiate start at quarterback Saturday. Head coach Mike said he probably won't reveal his starter until game time.

Ducks give 2-6 WSU their full attention

■ With three games left in the regular season, Oregon plans to stay in the Rose Bowl race with a win Saturday

By Mirjam Swanson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon promises not to overlook Washington State on Saturday.

Sure, the eighth-place Cougars are 2-6 overall and 1-4 in the Pacific-10 Conference.

And OK, several of their key players are injured, with a few not showing up at all this season due to various legal troubles.

And yes, if Southern California and UCLA had not both imploded, Washington State would be exactly where everyone expected it to be before the season began — in the conference cellar.

But besides all of that, the Ducks are seriously convinced that the Cougars are every bit as dangerous as any of their other Pac-10 foes.

That's because one more loss, regardless of who it comes against, eliminates Oregon (5-3, 3-2) from Rose Bowl contention.

So Oregon players and coaches really do mean it when they say that they're taking it one game at a time.

"I don't see this game as an easy game for us," Bellotti said. "I see it as a game with a Pac-10 Northwest rival. Washington State is our opponent this week, and they're certainly capable of beating us unless we play inspired football from snap to whistle."

Now, whether it's going to be A.J. Feeley or Joey Harrington who takes the majority of those snaps offensively is open

for speculation.

Bellotti said he planned to keep that information within the Ducks' camp until the last possible moment, just to keep Washington State guessing.

After sparking the Ducks to two straight come-from-behind wins, no one will be surprised if Harrington get his first collegiate start Saturday.

But the sophomore, 24 of 38 for 410 yards in four appearances, said he's not expecting anything.

"If I get a shot to play again this week, great," Harrington said. "I'll come in and try to do my job. But I don't think you can deserve anything as a player."

If there is a player who is deserving of another start to rectify any of his previous miscues, it's Feeley.

Although the junior hasn't looked quite like the standout quarterback he did earlier, he remains the Pac-10's leader in touchdowns, with 14, and ranks second in completions, with 134.

"The whole thing there is to deal with the mental approach of what starting means," Bellotti said. "And then, what coming off the bench means. It's like a reliever in baseball."

"I'll say this, when I first got here [as an offensive coordinator in 1989], if our first-string quarterback ever got hurt, we were in trouble. What's changed in the last five-to-seven years is that we've had excellent quarterbacks behind our first-string player. That's been a big factor in our ability to win consistently."

The major offensive factor recently has been tailback Reuben Droughns.

After suffering a rib injury against USC on Sept. 25 that kept him out of one game

Turn to Oregon, Page 9

Cougars struggle to overcome injuries, opposition

■ Inexperience, injuries and losses are nothing new for bruised and battered Washington State

By Scott Pesznecker
Oregon Daily Emerald

History shows that Washington State can be trouble for Oregon.

Dating back to 1901, the Cougars hold the edge in 76 meetings with a series record of 35-34-7. Even in the Ducks' own house, Washington State 17-16-5.

But don't be swayed by history.

Washington State has been nothing short of a punching bag for the Pacific-10 Conference this season.

Both the Cougars' victories were uncontested. Their only conference win was a 31-7 rout of California that snapped a school-record 12-game losing streak. Their other victory was a 44-0 domination of defenseless Louisiana-Lafayette.

Unfortunately for Washington State, it is usually the other team that holds the dominating edge on the scoreboard.

Utah ruined the Cougars' season opener, beating them in Pullman, Wash., 27-7 on Sept. 4. In its first Pac-10 game, Washington State traveled to Palo Alto, Calif., only to receive another beating — this time 54-17 from Stanford.



The fun didn't stop there.

Idaho and Arizona took turns beating the Cougars in their own stadium, winning by scores of 28-17 and 30-24, respectively. Later on, Arizona State took care of business 33-21 on Oct. 23.

Oregon State is Washington State's most recent attacker. The Beavers beat the Cougars 27-13 the day before Halloween.

A lengthy injured list of 17 players — eight of whom are out indefinitely — also tells the story of the Cougars' frustration.

Washington State has used five offensive line combinations as injuries have plagued the starters. Lincoln Walden-Schulz is the only offensive lineman who has started at the same position every game.

The defense is equally depleted. The

Cougars have used three different linebacker combinations and four different combinations in the secondary.

Washington State faces yet another problem — inexperience. Fifty-seven different players have seen action in at least three games, including 15 freshmen and nine sophomores.

Despite all their setbacks, the Cougars can't expect Oregon to go easy on them.

"It's just another great football team coming to town, and obviously they have maybe less to gain than we do," Ducks head coach Mike Bellotti said. "But they certainly have nothing to lose, and that's something that is an attitude that can make a team play with great intensity and have a lot of fun."

Bellotti is right to not take Washington State lightly.

Linebacker Steve Gleason ranks second in the Pac-10 with 10.5 tackles per game, followed by teammate Billy Newman, who ranks third in the conference with 9.3 tackles.

Running back Deon Burnett is second in the Pac-10 in scoring (8.3 points per game) and fifth in rushing with 92 yards per game. The freshman is also riding a four-game streak in

which he has rushed for more than 100 yards.

Quarterback Steve Birnbaum is also picking up the pace. He has climbed to No. 6 in the Pac-10 with almost 179 yards passing per game.

"Their quarterback is a good quarterback," Bellotti said. "He's very quietly assumed that duty this year, and he's moving up the chart in yards and all that, but he's a very accurate passer and given time he can pick you apart."

Birnbaum looks for wide receiver Leaford Hackett, who averages six catches per outing. Nian Taylor is another receiving threat, averaging almost five catches.

Still, the Cougar offense doesn't match up well with the rest of the conference — it is eighth in rushing and sixth in passing.

"They're close, and they come out and they tend to be a little inconsistent," Bellotti said. "They start off like a house on fire in a couple of games and throw the ball down the field, but don't get the ball into the end zone."

After the Ducks' last-second win over Arizona State last Saturday, it could be argued that Oregon also struggles at times to finish off drives.

quick HITS

Sizzling Stats

Scoring Offense	Scoring Defense
Oregon 35.6	Oregon 27.6
WSU 21.8	WSU 25.8

Quotable

"There's some unique things about Tony Hartley that people don't understand. He truly loves the game, and he is a student of the game. He knows football."

— Mike Bellotti, Oregon head coach

"Everybody wants to be out there and show what they can do, but if my job on this team is to come in and provide a spark, then so be it. You gotta accept your role as a team player."

— Joey Harrington, Oregon quarterback

Key Player Mike Bellotti

The Oregon head coach has to decide who to start at quarterback and then whether to replace him with the backup.

