

Bellotti's starters always changing

■ Oregon football continues the season-long shuffling of its starting lineup for a variety of reasons

By Mirjam Swanson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Pity the opposing coaches who have to prepare for the ever-eclectic Oregon football team.

Factors ranging from injuries to opponent's strengths and weaknesses and even individual Duck performances have given head coach Mike Bellotti reason to continually shake up his starting lineup.

Bellotti sent seven starters onto the field Saturday against Washington State who had not started in the Ducks' previous outing.

"We've been making changes," Bellotti said. "Sometimes they're subtle changes. There might be three guys on the offensive line starting at different positions than the week before."

"[We're] continuing to work very hard to get better, and we've been able to look at who's performed on the field, and that actually makes us win and makes us better."

Of course, one of the seven new starters last weekend was quarterback Joey Harrington, who took over for former starter A.J. Feeley.

Harrington's performance — 15 of 24 for 239 yards passing and three touchdowns to go with one rushing score — earned the sophomore his second start this weekend against the Pacific-10 Conference's best defense.

"Yes, we do [have a new starter]," Bellotti said earlier this

week. "Joey Harrington handled himself very well. He operated the offense very well. At this point in time, he's the starter."

So after having begun the season so tremendously — ranking among the nation's top-20 in both passing efficiency and total offense after five games — Feeley fell into a rut against UCLA on Oct. 9 and is the backup, for now.

"I think that A.J. was not healthy," Bellotti said. "It was a cumulative toll of playing five or six games and getting hit and that type of thing. He has some rib and muscle injuries that aren't outwardly visible, but they do affect the way you throw the ball. I feel bad myself that I put him in that situation."

Like Harrington, Justin Peelle also enjoyed a productive first start against the Cougars, catching two passes for 12 yards.

Unlike Harrington, Peelle admitted that he was plenty nervous before the game.

"I was nervous and tense throughout the whole week," Peelle said. "I didn't sleep that much. But once I got playing, the nerves got out of me."

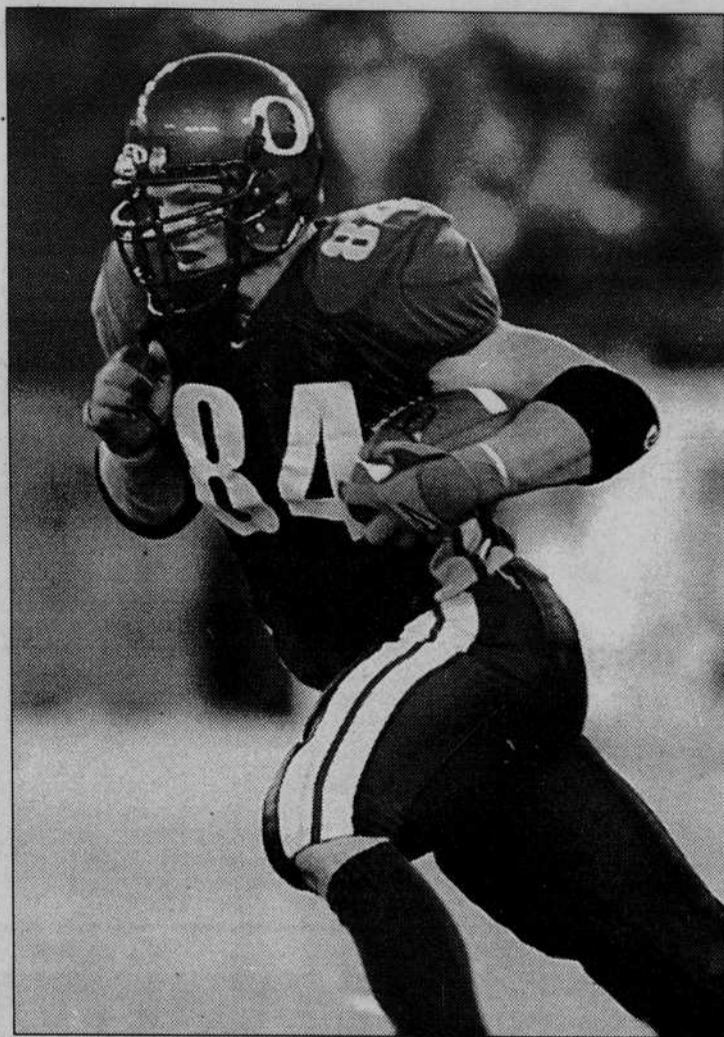
The lineup is due for even more reconfiguration Saturday, with the return of two offensive linemen from the injured list.

Sophomore tackle Al Cotton and redshirt freshman Corey Chambers are expected to play after missing several weeks of action.

Reunited

This weekend's trip to Berkeley, Calif., is the Ducks' first since 1995.

And it's a trek that Bellotti — a



Scott Barnett Emerald

Tight end Justin Peelle was admittedly nervous before his first start last Saturday.

Central California native — should especially enjoy. Before coming to Oregon in 1989, Bellotti held coaching positions at three different colleges in the region.

"We haven't been back there too much," Bellotti said. "But I still have a tremendous amount of friends and family and followers down there in the Bay Area, and so I'll get a chance to visit with them."

But Bellotti isn't the only one

who will be stepping into his coaching past. Oregon defensive line coach Don Pellum was the Golden Bears' recruiting coordinator and assistant athletics director between 1990 and 1992.

Concurrently, Cal running-backs coach Ron Gould started nine games for the Ducks as a defensive back in 1987 and was a graduate assistant with the Ducks in 1990 and 1991.

Nickerson

Continued from Page 11A

would make it hard for some athletes to gain attention, but Ducks head coach Tom Heinonen was well aware of the talent that existed in the small town.

"I took note of her when she was a sophomore," Heinonen said. "Anybody who's ever seen her run knows she is a smooth runner and strong competitor. She came from a high school with not a lot of competition, and she's someone who loves to compete."

Nickerson will be the first to tell you, however, that there is something she loves much, much more.

"I think she'll be the next big-time runner over the next couple of years."

Katie Crabb
cross country runner

"The hardest thing I ever had to do was leave my mom," Nickerson said. "We're only two and a half hours apart, but there was a time when I didn't think I could leave her. We're really close, and I

still call her every other night. Looking back though, I realize it was best to venture out on my own."

Her first fall hasn't all been smooth sailing. Nickerson has had to deal with pesky injury problems that seem to keep her from enjoying her success.

Although she did win that first meet at Clackamas, she strained her Achilles during that race and was forced to miss her team's visit to Notre Dame on Oct. 1.

"It was really tough to miss the first traveling trip with the team," Nickerson said. "I spent about two weeks aqua jogging and riding my bike and had to work my way back into shape."

The Achilles injury and an ailing quadriceps make Nickerson's impressive finishes at the Pre-NCAAs and Pacific-10 Championships all the more remarkable.

"This whole season has really been frustrating," Nickerson said. "As far as results, I'm ecstatic about that, but it's hard when you hurt every other day. I've gotten to know the treatment center a little too well."

With an upbeat attitude and a tremendous work ethic, big things are expected from the freshman that never really liked cross country until she started competing for Oregon.

UCLA in the 14-team tournament.

Sowden and Rizzo paced Oregon by tying for fourth place individually at 229, four strokes behind individual winner Laura Moffat of the Bruins. The Ducks' Jerilyn White also played well, tying for eighth place with a 231.

Oregon doesn't compete again until Feb. 21-23, when the Ducks travel to Tucson, Ariz., to partake in the Arizona Wildcat Classic.

Sports Brief

Women golfers claim second

Led by Pam Sowden and Angie Rizzo, the Oregon women's golf team finished second at the Rainbow Wahine Fall Golf Classic in Oahu, Hawaii.

The No. 21 Ducks shot a combined 929, which left them six strokes behind first-place No. 25

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