

Haughty Bruins upended by Ducks

UCLA's national title hopes are dashed in part by Oregon's famously ferocious Autzen Stadium home crowd

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

At the tail end of UCLA's upset wins over then-No. 3 ranked Alabama and Michigan earlier this month, the Bruin crowd in the Rose Bowl began chanting "Over-rat-ed!"

On Saturday, the Bruins again heard that same chant, but this time there was something awfully different about the words.

They were directed at them.

As the cliché goes, what a difference a week makes. After beating the Wolverines at home, the No. 6 Bruins were on cloud nine and inserting themselves in the race for the national championship.

"I think we proved we were the No. 1 team in the nation," said quarterback Ryan McCann, after his team became the first team

since 1993 to beat two teams ranked No. 3 or better in the same season. "I don't know who else we can beat, or what else we can do."

All such talk was quelled by the Oregon Ducks (3-1, 1-0), who dominated UCLA 29-10, beating their Pacific-10 rival for the first time since Sept. 16, 1995. It was the first road game of the season for the Bruins, who only have four road games on its schedule.

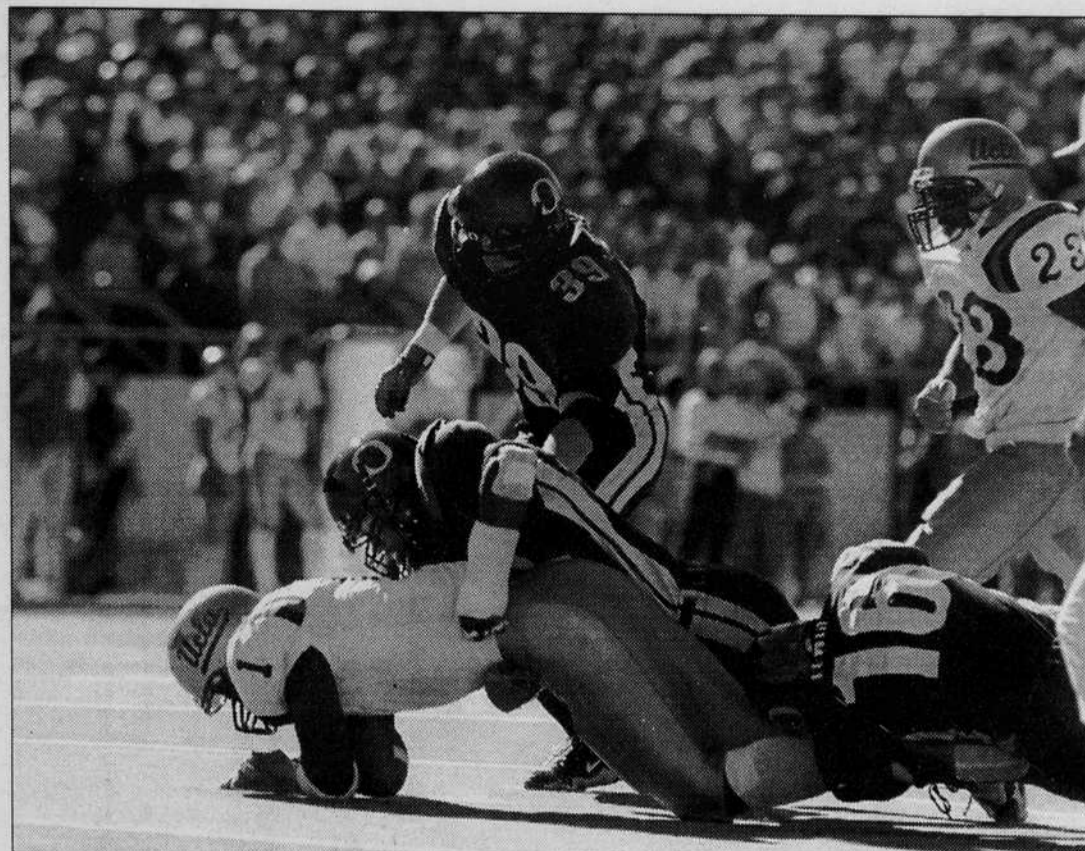
"If you're going to win championships, you gotta win on the road," Bruin head coach Bob Toledo said. "Because it's going to be hostile wherever you go."

Toledo did say, however, that Autzen Stadium certainly puts the visiting team at more of a disadvantage than other stadiums.

"They got it going [here]," Toledo said. "They've got nice facilities, they got a great crowd, great venue with that stadium and they're doing a nice job coaching some skilled kids."

In the week leading up to the

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Erin Swanson-Davies Emerald

UCLA's Tab Perry (1) experienced first hand the wrath of the Ducks defense on Saturday, as Kevin Mitchell (39) and Keith Lewis (16) help bring him down.

Big win

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ris said about his first conference game. "Actually, I think it was the best I could have."

The victory was the Ducks' 17th-straight at home. It was also the first Oregon win over UCLA since 1995.

"I'm extremely proud of my players and coaches, they did a great job," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "They battled, and I can't think of a better stage or better opportunity for people across the nation to see us do what we do best, and that's win at home."

The Ducks cracked the AP Top-25 poll for the first time this season at No. 20. Meanwhile, UCLA dropped from No. 6 to No. 15.

The Bruins, who made a late comeback to beat Michigan last Saturday, threatened to do the same against Oregon as they entered the second half down by 10. Chris Griffith kicked a 46-yard field goal early in the third quarter, and with 6 minutes, 55 seconds left in the period, backup quarterback Drew Bennett faked the option and found Freddie Mitchell in the end zone with a 54-yard touchdown pass. The extra point was good, tying the game at 10 all.

Oregon quarterback Joey Harrington completed two passes to Keenan Howry and one to Marshaun Tucker on the ensuing possession, but the drive stalled at the Bruins' 34-yard line when three passes fell incomplete.

At fourth-and-10, with 5:20 remaining in the third, the Ducks decided to go for it — and did it.

Harrington spotted tight end LaCorey Collins streaking down the Oregon sideline. He pulled back and released. Collins vied for position with a defender as the ball came down. Both Duck and Bruin jumped for it, and Collins, who managed to cradle the pigskin with one hand, came down with it.

Place kicker Josh Frankel completed the drive with a 24-yard field goal as the Ducks went on to score 19 unanswered points.

"The key was the offensive line and Maurice, without a doubt," Harrington said. "We had young guys in there, a couple guys making their first start, and they came out and dominated that defensive line."

"We got to go out in the second half and we got to execute," UCLA head coach Bob Toledo said. "We got it tied up at 10-10 and I started feeling better about it, but we just

couldn't make any plays offensively. Defensively we just got kind of worn out."

Before the game, ESPN's College GameDay show — broadcast live from Papé Field — pumped up Autzen Stadium as one of the country's most dangerous destinations for opposing teams, comparing it to the Florida State "chop shop" and the Florida Gators' "Swamp."

Three consecutive false starts by the Bruins in the first quarter showed the nation that Autzen is worthy of such a billing.

"The crowd was wonderful today," defensive tackle Jason Nikolao said. "We were getting our hands up to get them up. It was so loud the offensive linemen couldn't hear the quarterback."

On paper, Oregon bettered UCLA in almost every statistical category. The Ducks rushed for a total of 208 yards, while the Bruins' running game fizzled with a loss of nine. The Ducks had 361 yards total offense, the Bruins had 197. The Ducks fumbled twice but recovered both, while the Bruins lost two of three fumbles and committed an interception.

The ability of the Oregon defense to contain UCLA tailback DeShaun Foster was crucial. Suspecting that the young McCann would be rattled by the hostile Autzen environment, the defense focused its collective effort on stopping Foster.

The result was a mere 49 yards of rushing from a 1998 freshman All-American.

"This is the most fired-up I've ever seen this group as a defense," Nikolao said. "This is the only Pac-10 team we haven't beaten in past years, so we knew we just had to be on top of our game and just attack these guys."

After the Bruins won the coin toss and opted to kick, the Ducks scored on their second drive when Harrington dove into the end zone from one yard out and Frankel kicked the extra point. Frankel, who missed first-quarter field goal attempts from 44 and 39 yards, connected from 26 yards out with 1:24 to play in the second quarter. Oregon held a 10-0 lead at halftime.

The Ducks' schedule doesn't get any easier, as they host undefeated Washington (3-0 non-conference) at 12:30 p.m. Saturday.

"The nice thing is that the Huskies have to come to our place," Bellotti said. "They're a very good football team, and certainly so are we. We have to continue to improve and hope that we stay healthy."

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