

Football

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ing room, I heard Jerry Green's piercing announcer's voice scream, "Kenny Wheaton intercepts the football! Kenny Wheaton intercepts the football! Kenny Wheaton's gonna score!" I ran back to the television, but because of the audio delay, all I caught were 44,000 rowdy Oregon fans swarming the field and toppling the left goal post. Freshman cornerback Kenny Wheaton, second on the depth chart at the time, intercepted Huard's pass near the

goal line and returned the ball 97 yards to secure the 31-20 win. By many accounts, it was the biggest play in Oregon history.

At that exact moment, the tide turned in the Northwest. Washington no longer dominated Oregon on the field. The game changed the Oregon-Washington matchup from a grudge match into an intense, bitter rivalry.

The Ducks went on to the Rose Bowl that season and pushed the program to a new level.

Since then, Wheaton went on to a three-year stint with the Dallas Cowboys, and is now nursing an

injury and is without a professional team. Brooks had a brief head coaching stint with the St. Louis Rams and made it to the Super Bowl as an assistant with Atlanta.

Oregon football has recorded more wins than any other Pacific-10 Conference team since 1994 and has gone on to four bowl games in that span.

It is the Oregon-Washington rivalry that has undergone the biggest change. The Ducks have won five of their last seven games against the Huskies and finished higher than them in the Pac-10 standings three times.

Players and fans attending this season's Washington game were reminded of Wheaton's heroics Saturday as the former Oregon cornerback was named an honorary captain. When the famous interception was played on the Autzen Stadium megavision screen, Wheaton buried his head in his hands in embarrassment.

Wheaton was not embarrassed, however, to see his former team demolish the No. 6 Huskies, 23-16. Oregon defensive backs Jermaine Hanspard and Matt Smith each picked off Husky quarterback Marques Tuiasosopo once, though nei-

ther came close to the magnitude of Wheaton's pick in '94.

Wheaton's presence also reminded Duck fans that the last time Oregon defeated two top-10 opponents on consecutive weekends, it went to the Rose Bowl.

It's still too early to really tell, but the Ducks may have what it takes to reach the Rose Bowl — and they reached this point on a foundation laid by Kenny Wheaton and his teammates.

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Name that defense

Want to name the Oregon football defense?

They're a gang and they're green, but defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti said that these Ducks can't share the same nickname of the 1995 Rose Bowl squad. So, we at the Emerald sports desk are hosting an informal "name that defense" competition.

It's simple: Just e-mail your nickname ideas to Smittside@aol.com. We'll publish the top-10 ideas in an upcoming Game Day supplement, along with your name of course. For the top nickname, we are giving away a copy of the 1995 book titled, "The Year of the Duck." The book is written by former Oregon sports information director George Beres, and is a detailed look into the Oregon Ducks' 1995 Rose Bowl season, full of unique anecdotes and captivating pictures.

And hey, who knows. Your idea might make headlines across the nation.

Blazers' Schrempf retires after 15 NBA seasons

TUALATIN — Detlef Schrempf, a versatile and consistent forward, retired Monday after 15 NBA seasons.

The 37-year-old German, who played last season with the Portland Trail Blazers, averaged 14.2 points, 6.3 rebounds, and 3.4 assists for his career. He was an All-Star three times.

Schrempf said he was looking forward to spending more time with his family and building some businesses he's involved in.

"I would especially like to thank the Blazers organization," Schrempf said in a statement. "They are a first-class organization and gave me the opportunity to play for a championship-caliber team."

Padres may soon be Gwynn-less

SAN DIEGO — The San Diego Padres are accustomed to losing seasons. The Padres might now have to get used to life without Tony Gwynn.

After coming off a sub-.500 season for the 21st time in the team's 32-year history, the Padres will invoke the \$2 million buyout clause in Gwynn's contract.

But whether that means that the eight-time National League batting champion is finished in San Diego remains just one of many offseason questions facing the Padres.

"We're looking at a lot of tough decisions," GM Kevin Towers said. "But there may be none tougher than what to do with Tony."

After left knee surgery on June 27 wiped out Gwynn's season, the Padres have decided to buy out his contract, allowing Gwynn to become a free agent.

Gwynn, who turns 41 in May, batted .323 in his 19th season. But the injury sidelined the 15-time All-Star for all but 36 games.

"I don't have much to decide on until the Padres make their decision," Gwynn said. "But regardless of what happens, I'm confident that I'll be ready for next season. I'm not worried."

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