

# Oregon at crossroads in crucial away game

■ Oregon faces new challenges and old foes on the road this weekend at USC

By Robbie McCallum  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The sweet confines of Autzen Stadium have been called by many as the Ducks' 12th man. But that 12th man won't be able to make the trip to Los Angeles for No. 9 Oregon's matchup with Southern California.

Although the Pacific-10 conference game has lost some of its earlier luster, the matchup is still crucial for both teams and their post-season hopes. On paper, the unranked, 3-2 Trojan's don't stand much of a chance against Oregon and its three-game win streak.

But top-10 national rankings have been more of a curse than a blessing this season for Pac-10 schools, especially for teams on the road. The Ducks look to break that trend.

On Sept. 23, then-No. 6 UCLA fell from the national spotlight with a 29-10 loss at Oregon. A week later, a new No. 6 team, Washington, was dealt a setback on the road in Eugene.

Now Oregon is in the Pac-10 drivers seat on the road. The Ducks make their second appearance on the road Saturday, and Duck players have something to prove.

"We've played real good at Autzen, and everyone is like 'Oh, it's just the crowd,'" senior wide receiver Marshaun Tucker said. "We have to show them that Oregon can go on the road and win some games."

As successful as Oregon has

been at home, it has been mediocre at best on the road. In the past four years, the Ducks are 10-13. At Los Angeles Coliseum, Oregon is 1-8-1 against USC through the past 25 years. In the history of the series, in which USC leads 33-13-2, Oregon has only won four times at the Coliseum.

"Playing on the road always concerns me," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "I would rather play every game at home, but we have to go on the road in order to compete in this conference, you

“I think about the [Wisconsin] game and it kills me. We should have won that game. We missed a couple of tackles and let them get a couple of breaks that they shouldn't have gotten.”

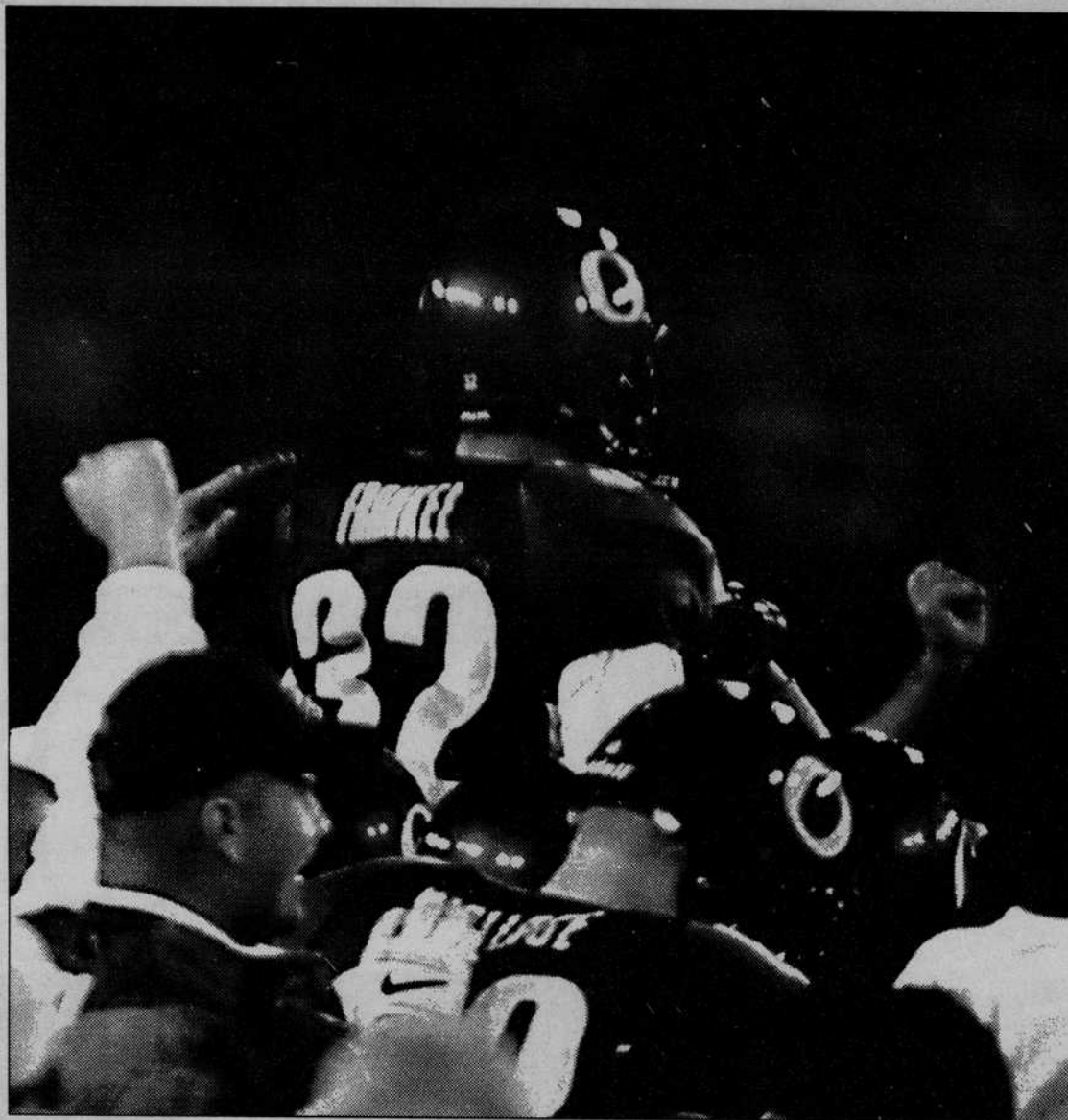
Jason Nikolao  
senior defensive end

have to prove that you can win on the road.”

Oregon's lone miscue this season came on the road in Madison, Wis. Then-No. 5 Wisconsin narrowly defeated Oregon 27-23 at Camp Randall Stadium in a loss that burned Oregon players.

"I think about [the Wisconsin] game and it just kills me," senior defensive end Jason Nikolao said. "We should have won that game. We missed a couple of tackles and let them get a couple of breaks that

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Oregon got the best of USC last season on Josh Frankel's (32) game-winning field goal, but things will be tougher on the road.

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