

# Arizona not scared of Autzen

■ Defense will be the key to victory for the Arizona Wildcats, who hope to stay in the run for the roses

By Adam Jude  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Arizona head coach Dick Tomey said it's not Autzen Stadium that makes the Oregon football team so good — it's the Oregon football team itself.

"Oregon's home streak [of 18 games] is unbelievable," said Tomey, who ranks eighth all-time in Pacific-10 Conference wins, but has never won at Autzen Stadium. "But the problem with playing up there is Oregon's team. There's a lot of noise that takes some time to adjust to, but the team is the main problem."

Tomey insists that if you put a less talented team in Autzen, the wins wouldn't come as easily.

"If you take a look at the conference stats, they are number one in a lot of categories," Tomey said. "If they had a bad team, and the crowd was so loud that you couldn't hear, that wouldn't be much of a challenge."

There's too much at stake for the 21st-ranked Wildcats (5-1, 3-0) in this game, so don't expect them to look too far ahead.

"We can't let uncontrollable, external circumstances get in our way," said Tomey, who has led the Wildcats to the best Pac-10 record (59-30) over the last seven years.

Arizona's fifth-year quarterback Ortege Jenkins, who did not play in the Wildcats' last visit to Autzen in 1997, told the Arizona Daily Wildcat that he is not intimidated by Oregon's rowdy fans.

"We understand that there are

some problems, and we know what we have to do to make it happen," Jenkins said. "It's a football stadium. It's not like a dungeon where they put poison in our food. It's a stadium; you play the game. It's between the lines that the game is on."

Perhaps Jenkins will change his mind Saturday.

Nonetheless, the one thing that the Wildcats know for sure, despite all of the hype about Autzen, is that their defense will have to stop the Pac-10's top offense if they wish to stay in Rose Bowl contention.

While Arizona's rushing defense is top in the league, its passing defense is second-worst in the Pac-10.



Can you see Oregon quarterback Joey Harrington's mouth watering?

"I think we've proved we're not a great defense," said Tomey, after his team narrowly defeated Washington State 53-47 in triple overtime last weekend.

In that game, the Cougars' Jason Gesser threw for 378 yards and six touchdowns. One positive for the Wildcats' defense is cornerback Michael Jolivette. The redshirt freshman is third in the nation with five interceptions.

"Michael has shown maturity far beyond his days this year," Tomey said. "It's just incredible what he's done so far." Arizona's offense has also had its struggles. Jenkins is barely completing 50 percent of his passes, while his touchdown-to-interception ratio is just 7-to-5.

Overall, the Wildcats have the worst offense in the Pac-10, averaging 310 yards per contest.

Both teams know the implications that come in this matchup of

undefeated league teams. The Wildcats are not letting the thought of roses get to their heads, though.

“It's a football stadium. It's not like a dungeon where they put poison in our food. It's a stadium; you play the game... This game will be a big-time game. It'll test our character, going up there where people say you can't win.”

Ortege Jenkins  
Arizona quarterback

"We've done a good job of handling the fact that we were underrated," Tomey said. "Now we need to handle the fact that we are getting a little recognition."

The Wildcats are also not looking past the Ducks.

"I'm not thinking Rose Bowl. I'm thinking Oregon Ducks," Jenkins told USA Today. "This game will be a big-time game. It'll test our character, going up there where people say you can't win."

While there are four more conference games after this weekend, the championship trophy may likely be decided Saturday in Eugene.

"[The champion] will be the team that gets better from here on out," Tomey said. "You have to assume that every game you play in the conference is for the championship. It's going to be a wild finish."

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