

# Sun Devils' offensive show goes for naught in loss

■ Arizona State treats its 50,000-plus fans to a high-powered offensive performance, but some questionable calls late in the game lead to a tough defeat to Oregon

By Jeff Smith  
Oregon Daily Emerald

One team scores 55 points, and gathers 667 total offensive yards.

Its starting tailback — a walk-on that earns a living cleaning pools — rushes for a career-high 158 yards on 33 carries.

Its starting quarterback — a red-shirt freshman that has battled through mononucleosis to take over the starting role — lights it up for 432 yards and five touchdowns, while completing 21 of his 34 passes.

And, in the end, that team loses.

Such was the case for head coach Bruce Snyder's Arizona State Sun Devils Saturday, in their heartbreaking 56-55 double-overtime loss to the Oregon Ducks at Sun Devil Stadium.

"[I feel] just drained," Snyder said. "It was a very hard-fought game. I told my team that I'm proud of them in terms of their effort."

It wasn't the Sun Devil players who had to deal with the second-guessing afterwards, it was Snyder himself.

Arizona State trailed 56-49 in the second overtime, but still had a shot

to tie the game up. On a third-and-six from the 21-yard line, quarterback Jeff Krohn found Richard Williams in the end zone for the touchdown pass.

The Sun Devils' kicking team trotted out for the extra point, while it appeared a third overtime was soon to begin. But then the ball was snapped to Krohn, who instead of holding it for place-kicker Mike Barth, got up and threw towards tight end Todd Heap in the end zone for the potential game-winning two-point conversion.

Heap couldn't corral it, and the ballgame abruptly ended in Oregon's favor.

Snyder expected to be second-guessed on the gutsy call.

"The whole decision is on me, obviously," Snyder said. "I just said, 'Let's try to win it right here.' We've been practicing that play, we do it every week. It's something that's well-drilled. We just didn't get it completed."

Snyder also mentioned how Barth's lower back was hurting, which had impacted an earlier field goal miss. Barth's health also affected a play call made late in the fourth quarter, when the Sun Devils were faced with a fourth-and-14 from the Oregon 33-yard line with 2:22 to play in the game.

Instead of kicking it and extending its 49-42 lead, Arizona State went for it, didn't get the first down and turned the ball back to Oregon.

It was a move that would eventually lead to Oregon's game-tying score.

"That was one of the most difficult decisions in the game, no question," Snyder said.

All week, Duck head coach Mike Bellotti warned his team that the Sun Devils would be no push-over.

"Arizona State, coming in at 5-2 after what they've gone through is a tremendous testament to their coaches and their players," said Bellotti, referring to the Sun Devil injury problems. "We knew we were in for a battle."

A courageous battle put on by both teams that left one side amazed at its own victory, and another facing the dreaded two worded question, "What if?"

## Oregon limping but recovering after big-time win at ASU

■ Injuries to Jason Nikolao and Maurice Morris top the list of banged-up Ducks

By Scott Pesznecker  
Oregon Daily Emerald

After the Oregon football team marched into Sun Devil Stadium and stunned Arizona State in double overtime, it began the process of limping back to Eugene.

Several key players on the offense and defense were banged-up, bruised and battered in the Ducks' dramatic win. Fortunately, Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said that most of those injuries will amount to a few missed days of practice.

"I expect there to be a long list of

walking wounded on Monday," Bellotti said. "By Tuesday, everyone should be back."

While most of those injuries aren't too severe, a couple setbacks could have an impact on the rest of the season.

Senior defensive end Jason Nikolao, one of Oregon's best defenders when it comes to stopping the run, partially tore the medial collateral ligament in his right knee during Arizona State's first possession of Saturday's game.

While the typical recovery time for such an injury is between two and six weeks, Bellotti said he is optimistic that Nikolao will be back in two or three weeks.

If Bellotti's timeline holds true,

Nikolao would be back on the field in time for the Civil War. Not to mention Ken Simonton, the Pacific-10 Conference's leading tailback. In the meantime, he will be replaced by junior Zack Freiter, who has been sharing time with Nikolao this season.

"He has been playing more and more each game and doing a good job," Bellotti said. "His game shape is improving dramatically."

Tailback Maurice Morris, who bruised some ribs Saturday, is another player Oregon must keep a close eye on. Morris will start against Washington State Saturday.

Last season, tailback Reuben Droughns had to wear a flak jacket to protect him from torn rib cartilage,

which became a nuisance down the stretch of the season. However, Bellotti said that Morris' injury is not as serious as Droughns' was.

Cornerback Rashad Bauman had to leave Saturday's game in the fourth quarter after sustaining a dislocated shoulder, but Bellotti expects him back to practice by mid-week and ready to play against the Cougars.

Defensive end Saul Patu

(strained right knee), safety Ryan Mitchell (sore ankle) and linebacker Garrett Sabol (swelling in calf and left knee) are also on the "banged-up" list of Oregon players. According to Bellotti, all should be healthy enough to play in Saturday's game.

And that's a good thing — a quarterback like Washington State's Jason Gesser would love to face a depleted Oregon defense.

## Double OT win

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victory.

But whenever the defense would give up a big play to ASU's Heap or tailback Tom Pace, Oregon's Harrington would turn it up. Harrington continued his road dominance by completing 26-of-43 passes for a career-high 434 yards and six touchdowns.

"I'm in complete and total shock right now," said Harrington, whose six touchdowns tied the Oregon record for most in a game, set by Danny O'Neil in the 1994 Rose Bowl season. "We played so hard out there. We battled our butts off."

The game capped a crazy 24 hours for Oregon, who arrived into Tempe, Ariz., 2 1/2 hours after expected because of weather problems in Phoenix. The players didn't fall asleep until 1:30 a.m., and

then had to rise at 7 a.m. for the 12:30 p.m. game.

"I told them yesterday sitting on the plane that this would probably be the greatest adventure of their life," said Bellotti, referring to the plane delays. "Little did I know that the game would be the best."

Oregon's long night was evident in its sluggish start. The Sun Devils caught the Oregon defense sleeping on a 69-yard Krohn to Pace touchdown pass with 5:55 to go in the first quarter to grab the early 7-0 advantage. The Ducks responded over four minutes later when Morris ran in from 17-yards out to tie it up.

The Sun Devils would take charge in the second quarter, as Krohn completed a 28-yard touchdown pass to Donnie O'Neil. Then Sun Devil linebacker Adam Archuleta forced a questionable Harrington fumble in the end zone, and ASU's Eric Fields recovered it for the score to give Arizona State

the early 21-7 lead.

Oregon wouldn't give up, however, and two Harrington touchdown passes later (to Howry and Marshaun Tucker), and the teams would enter the half tied at 21.

"We had to come back twice in this game — in the first half and in the second," said Howry, who did not start the game due to a hip pointer, but finished with four catches for 125 yards, including two touchdowns. "Everybody made some big plays."

Bellotti has coached many great games during his tenure as head coach of Oregon, but ranks Saturday's affair near the top of the list.

"This is as good as any," said Bellotti, whose team travels to Washington State next weekend. "I don't think I've ever been prouder of my kids in my life. Win or lose I would've said that. This was a wonderful, exciting, tremendous football game."

## Pez Sez

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on passing and run the football on its first three overtime attempts. No luck.

Then, with a chance to win it in Southern California fashion, place kicker Josh Frankel walked onto the field to attempt a 42-yard field goal. He missed.

Well, maybe that wasn't so astonishing, but at least the kick was close.

The tension continued to mount in the second overtime. The Ducks capped a passing drive with an Allan Amundson run, as the sophomore ran into the end zone and posted the touchdown. The score marked Oregon's first lead of the day.

Wow.

But the Sun Devils weren't done yet. Another touchdown and they lined up for the extra point, ready to take the game into its third overtime.

Fake.

See tight end Todd Heap try to

break free. See him dash into the end zone. See Oregon's Rasuli Webster follow, see the ball fly from Krohn's hand, see Webster and Heap reach for it with one hand — and then see the ball wisp away from Heap's fingertips and fall incomplete, once and for all.

The comeback was complete. All across the state, I imagined thousands of Oregonians jumping from their seats with arms raised in triumph, each one with about 10 years less to live after such a suspenseful game.

No Arizona State upset. Oregon is still the Pacific-10 Conference's only undefeated team. The Ducks still control their own destiny in the Rose Bowl race. They won, despite losing key players and fighting from behind throughout regulation and half of the first overtime.

Which brings me back to my first statement.

Madness.

Unfortunately, the costs of winning were high. It will be tough for Oregon to keep its winning streak

alive, considering it could be without key defensive players in the next couple of weeks.

Also, tailback Maurice Morris bruised some ribs and didn't play in most of the fourth quarter or in the overtimes.

Washington State and California should be easily won games, even with the losses in the roster. However, Oregon State has shown by now it is a force to be reckoned with, and the Ducks will need a full supporting cast if they are to put up a good fight in Corvallis.

Because while Oregon was making an asylum out of Sun Devil Stadium, the Beavers were driving Washington State bonkers at Reser Stadium, blowing the hapless Cougars out by a score of 38-9.

That Oregon State team is off its rocker up there.

But Oregon football? Perhaps nobody can figure it out.

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