

The General

■ Oregon's Joey Harrington has led the Ducks to some memorable wins, but it's the two defeats this season that help fuel his fire for the bowl game

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

The two scenes were practically identical.

Scene one: It's Sept. 9 in Madison, Wisc., and the Oregon Ducks have just received a heart-crushing 27-23 defeat to the then-No. 5 Wisconsin Badgers.

Sitting on top of an exercise machine with his head looking down is Oregon quarterback Joey Harrington. He tries to speak, but can't as tears and emotion fill his face. He's asked how he feels, and the only word he can muster is "hard."

He excuses himself and then comes back out 10 minutes later, this time a little more clear-headed, but still speaking in barely a whisper.

"I've never played this hard and lost before, so I don't know how to react," Harrington said back then. "You can look at 100 plays and think 'What if?' in a game like this."

It was Harrington's first ever loss as a starter, and he did not enjoy the taste of defeat. In fact, a few days after that he said how he'd rather not feel that way ever again. Well, the Ducks kept winning throughout the season in remarkable fashion until... the Civil War, of course.

Which brings us to scene two:

It's Nov. 18, and Oregon has just had its Rose Bowl hopes dashed by its in-state rivals by losing 23-13 to the fellow co-Pacific-10 Conference champion Beavers.

Harrington sits on a chair in the dim basement of the nearby Gill Coliseum. His bare feet look wounded, and so does his pride. He just sits there, as reporters huddle around him, and he quietly stares

down while clutching a white pad with both hands. He tries to hide his obvious hurt, but it's tough.

He is asked questions. Again, his voice is practically nonexistent.

He then is questioned whether he ever let the thought of defeat enter his mind.

"I had no doubts," Harrington said. "We had the ball at the 10-yard line, we score, we cut it to three points with six, seven, five minutes left. It didn't matter because we'd battled back all year."

Clearly, this was not the way he envisioned the season going. A season that included so many amazing wins suddenly got tarnished by a defeat that Harrington knew would "haunt [him] for the rest of [his] life."

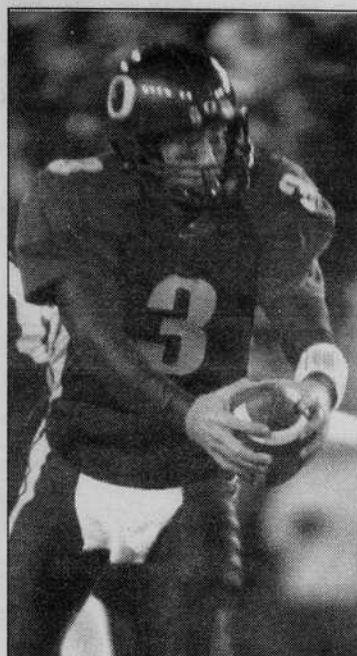
And now, instead of preparing for a trip to Pasadena for the prestigious Rose Bowl, Harrington and the Ducks are getting ready for a date in San Diego against the No. 12 Texas Longhorns on Dec. 29 in the Holiday Bowl.

But this is why he is respected so much by his teammates. This is why he is commonly referred to as "The General." He is the leader of the Ducks, and whether the team wins or loses, Harrington will be the one who people will look toward.

"This is a position that I've been in my entire life," said Harrington, who is 15-2 as a starter. "I'm used to it. I'm comfortable with it. I like being the guy that the team rallies around."

And even after a game in which he throws five interceptions, his teammates stand behind him.

"Nobody's perfect," senior wide



Emerald

Joey Harrington is 15-2 as Oregon's QB.

receiver Marshaun Tucker said. "He went out there and played hard, and that's all you can ask."

"Joey's put together a great season," junior cornerback Rashad Bauman said. "Joey's gone in there day-in and day-out and handled business. Some games just don't go your way."

More than two weeks have passed since that fateful day in Corvallis, and Oregon seems to be slowly letting go of Oregon State and looking toward capturing the first 10th win in Oregon football history.

Which brings us to scene three for Harrington: It's Sunday at 2:50 p.m. Harrington sits down in front of the press to discuss his team's se-

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