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GAME DAY

Best Bet
UCLA at Oregon State
12:30 p.m., ABC



Friday, September 28, 2001

Time for Ducks to finally win big

In three games this season, Jason Fife has connected on 0 for 0, passing for 0 yards and zero touchdowns.

He hasn't been sacked and hasn't experienced the rush of a raging defensive lineman while he attempts to look for an open receiver. Heck, he hasn't even crouched behind center Ryan Schmid and placed his hands in between...well,

you get the point.

All of that needs to change.

And this Saturday at 6:05 p.m. in the quaint town of Logan, Utah, (pop. 42,000), Fife should get the opportunity to do just



Jeff Smith
Hakuna Matata

that against Utah State in Romney Stadium.

After the neck-and-neck win over Wisconsin, the too close for comfort victory against Utah and the nail-biting, stomach-churning, and, these days at least, ho-hum win against USC, it's time for the Ducks to let it loose.

It's time for the Oregon offense to explode and take advantage of a Utah State defense that has surrendered 23 points to Utah, 31 points to LSU and 43 points to Wyoming — all losses.

It's time for the defense to not give up the big plays; those back-breakers that bring a team right back in the game.

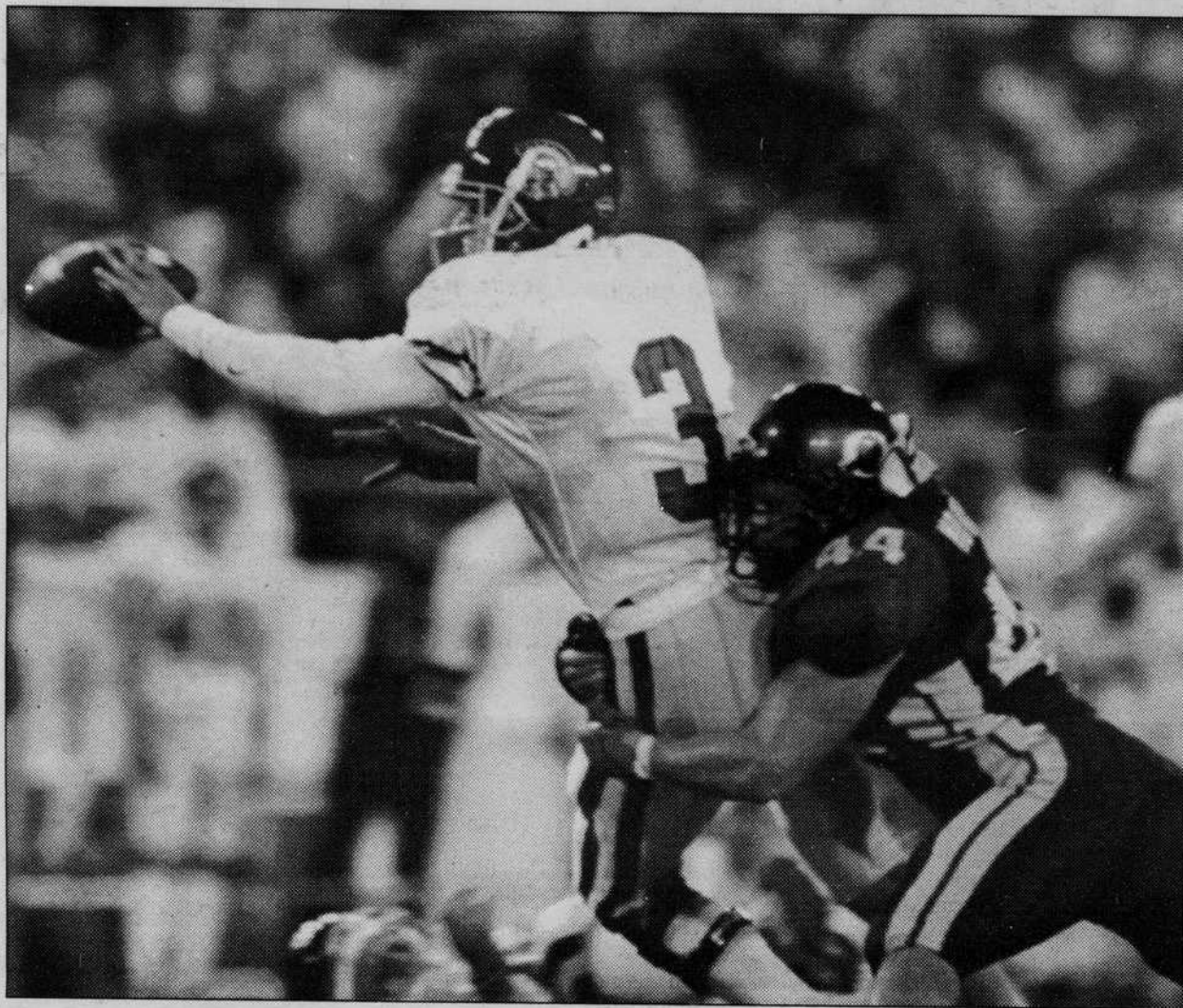
This week, that means guarding against the Aggies' All-American senior tailback Emmett White, who is sixth on the all-time NCAA all-purpose yards per game list after averaging 238.9 yards in 2000. (Barry Sanders is first with the 295.5 yards he picked up while with Oklahoma State in 1988.)

And that means sticking Rashad Bauman directly on wide receiver Kevin Curtis, who is third in the country in receiving yards with 130, and first in receptions with 10.67.

Oregon needs to conduct a good ol' fashioned blowout. It needs to let Joey Harrington build up some Heisman-like passing numbers, move the offense on a series of smooth running scoring drives and then take a seat on the sidelines. Relax.

Have him take off the hel-

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Junior linebacker Dave Moretti, here taking down USC's Carson Palmer, had seven tackles against the Trojans in Oregon's 24-22 win Saturday.

Ducks trying to avoid letdown

■ Oregon will face a motivated Utah State a week after an emotional win over rival USC

By Peter Hockaday and Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

An exhausting, last-second 24-22 win against one of the most successful programs in Pacific-10 Conference history is a hard act to follow, especially when the next scene involves 0-3 Utah State.

But think of Saturday's 6 p.m. non-conference matchup against the Aggies as a midterm exam for the sixth-ranked Oregon football squad (3-0 overall, 1-0 Pac-10).

It's not supposed to be a pop-quiz, or even the dreaded final, it's just a test any freshman would pass with flying colors.

Cornerback Steve Smith, a hero of last week's emotional two-point victory, said the Ducks know how it feels to be Utah State.

"A couple years ago, we were the unranked team, and we know how fired up we got to win," Smith said. "We know they're going to be ready for us to come in there."

The Ducks, favored by more than two touchdowns, head to Logan, Utah, for the first of three straight road games.

"You never really know what type

of team you have until you go on the road," head coach Mike Bellotti said. "Playing at home is one thing and it's obviously a comfort zone with a supportive crowd."

"We're going to someone else's house, and if we want to accomplish the things we've set out for ourselves, then this is the next step," Bellotti said. "We cannot overlook anybody. There is not the margin for error."

No margin for error. This is the No. 6 team in the nation, talking about an 0-3, independent school with a stadium that seats 30,257. But the Ducks

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Utah State's first win would be gigantic

■ Aggies will face the highest ranked opponent ever to come into Romney Stadium Saturday

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

Don't let the 0-3 record deceive you. The Aggies of Utah State need to be taken seriously if the Ducks want to come out of Romney Stadium with a win Saturday.

Third-team All-American Emmett White stands in Oregon's way of its first 4-0 start in three years. With 322 yards rushing in one game, 578 all-purpose yards in one game and 238.9 all-purpose yards per game, White carries the Aggie offense on his shoulders. He is sixth on the all-time NCAA all-purpose yards list and a three-year letterman.

Utah State head coach Mick Dennehy has flooded his star back with praise.

"I am running out of adjectives to describe this kid," Dennehy said. "He does the type of things that amaze you and leave your mouth open."

Despite White rushing for 463 yards in 71 carries and three touchdowns (he also has 93 yards and one touchdown receiving) in its first three games, Utah State has lost all of those contests. The Aggies fell 23-19 to Utah on Sept. 1, to LSU 31-14 in week two and last Saturday lost a nailbiter at home to Wyoming, 43-42. In that loss, the Aggies had a chance to tie the game with an extra point, but because of a 15-yard celebration penalty after the touchdown, the kick was blocked.

Dennehy said his team is playing just well enough to lose.

"As well as we are playing and as good of a football team as we are capable of being, we are still not doing things quite right enough to beat the opponents that are on our schedule,"

he said.

When the ball isn't in White's hands, quarterback Jose Fuentes looks for wide receiver Kevin Curtis, who leads the nation in receptions per game and is third in receiving yards with 130.

The offense is capable of putting up big numbers, but the Aggie defense will most likely give them up. In the first three games, they have allowed 97 points, but they have yet to show their best stuff.

"I think we are a better defense than we showed. I don't think we played near our capabilities," Dennehy said.

History is not on the side of the Utah State, as they have lost the last seven games they have played against ranked opponents. The No. 6 Ducks are the highest ranked team ever to play in Romney Stadium.

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THE BOX

Key Number:
19-2

The Ducks' record over their last 21 games, which equals Miami, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Virginia Tech as the best record over that time span. The ledger is Oregon's best-ever 21-game record.

National Rankings

Total Offense

Utah St.....41

Oregon.....59

Scoring Offense

Oregon.....45

Utah St.....52

Passing Offense

Oregon.....30

Utah St.....36

Rushing Offense

Utah St.....52

Oregon.....84

Total Defense

Oregon.....87

Utah St.....108

Scoring Defense

Oregon.....51

Utah St.....94

Passing Defense

Utah St.....100

Oregon.....111

Rushing Defense

Oregon.....30

Utah St.....101

Quotable

"They're the best team that we've played so far."

Mick Dennehy
Utah State coach, whose team has yet to face Oregon this season. The teams square off Saturday.

Key Player:
Emmett White

Utah State's third-team All-American running back will have to carry his team if the Aggies want to topple No. 6 Oregon. White is averaging 154.3 yards per game this season, and has scored three touchdowns. White is also dangerous as a kick returner.