

Arizona

continued from page 2B

Speaking of the Cougars, Jason Gesser and company pounded Arizona last week en route to a 48-21 win in Tucson, Ariz. What was originally marked to be a strong matchup of two surprising teams turned real ugly, real quick.

Washington State came out with 28 early points against the Wildcat defense, only to see Arizona quickly score 21 points of its own. However, those would be the first and only points the Wildcats would score, as the Cougars came back with 20 unanswered points.

After the game, Johnson knows he has to play better for the team to survive. He completed 13 passes on 25 attempts for 184 yards. He also threw an interception on the third play of the game, setting the tone in the blowout.

"I've got to take the blame for the slow start because I'm the quarterback," Johnson told the Arizona Daily Wildcat. "It was a tough loss, and we've got to hand it to them."

Mackovic knows that for the

Wildcats to survive in the Pac-10, Oregon is a crucial opponent.

"Oregon is a really good team," he said. "They see this as a key Pac-10 game, so they will be ready to play like that. Their very best will be on display Saturday, so we have to raise our level of play this week."

The Arizona defense must play strong to contain the sluggish yet potentially explosive Oregon offense. The Pac-10's fourth ranked defense features junior linebacker Lance Briggs and sophomore cornerback Michael Jolivet. Jolivet, known best by Oregon fans as the player who had his helmet knocked off by Ducks' linebacker Wesly Mallard last season, has two interceptions this season, including a key one against Idaho in the Wildcats' second win.

But none of this matters if Arizona doesn't come to play.

"We have to go back to work and go about our business," Mackovic said. "Football is a high-performance game, and you can try hard, but you still have to perform. We have to make sure that the players understand what they need to do this week."

Mallard

continued from page 3B

knee injury, Mallard recorded 26 tackles last season as a specialist and back-up linebacker.

"Wesly Mallard is the best outside linebacker in the Pac-10. He's the fastest, most physical player I've ever played with."

Keith Lewis
Oregon safety

Now, the man with the coincidental name is starring in a starter's role.

"Wesly Mallard is the best outside linebacker in the Pac-10," sophomore safety Keith Lewis

said. "He's the fastest, most physical player I've ever played with."

The most improvement this season has come from Mallard's mental preparation.

"Wesly is much improved," head coach Mike Bellotti said. "He's always had the physical tools, but he is spending more time as a student of the game, being able to prepare himself mentally to utilize his physical skills and the gifts he has. I'm very pleased with his progress."

"Wes works hard on and off the field, all season," Lewis said. "He's very physically defined ... and it will all pay off in the long run."

Whether the "long run" is leading the Ducks to the Rose Bowl or entering the National Football League, Mallard is sure to be ready, in all aspects of his game, and remembered as a person.

Preview

continued from page 2B

the Wildcats reeling. Arizona finished the season with five straight losses, which shut the Wildcats out of the bowl picture and eventually got then-head coach Dick Tomey fired.

Now, with Mackovic at the helm, the Wildcats are out to prove that they are a changed team and an upset victory over the Ducks (4-0) could go a long way for them.

"Their very best play will be on display Saturday, so we have to raise our level of play," Mackovic said. "Not to be unfair, but they haven't

played at the same level for all of their games as they did against Wisconsin. We haven't played at the same level for that matter."

The Wildcats didn't look sharp in their 48-21 loss to Washington State last week, but the Ducks are not taking them lightly. Arizona quarterback Jason Johnson has thrown seven touchdown passes this season, including a school and Pac-10 record 99-yarder, and sophomore halfback Clarence Farmer has already recorded a 100-yard game and two 90-yard outings.

"It's an uphill climb from here because every team in the Pac-10 is good and has a chance to knock you

off at any time," Oregon linebacker David Moretti said. "There aren't any weeks off, that's for sure."

Bellotti has stressed over the past couple weeks that his team needs to become "road warriors." The Ducks passed their first road test last week with their 38-21 victory at Utah State, but now comes the challenge of a Pac-10 foe in a hostile environment.

"I really believe that the team that can stay healthy and continue to improve all season long is the one that has the best chance in this conference," Bellotti said. "And we get our first real test, in my mind, this week."

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