

FROM GOAT TO GLORY

THE LIFE OF A KICKER

Punter Jose Arroyo and placekicker Jared Siegel are both experiencing their first years in high-pressured positions together as teammates, roommates and friends

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

Athletes with tattooed biceps attached to bodies taller than six feet and heavier than 250 pounds slam into each other play-after-play for 59 minutes.

And then, with sweat dripping from their behemoth frames, they take their battered bodies to the sidelines and watch as all of their exerted energy culminates in the right leg of a 5-foot-10, 172-pound freshman.

That would be Oregon placekicker Jared Siegel, who raised his value among his teammates on Sept. 22 when he made their hard work pay off.

With his team behind by one and with only 12 seconds remaining, he strolled onto the field and calmly booted a 32-yard field goal through the uprights to lift the Ducks to a 24-22 victory against Southern California under the bright lights of Autzen Stadium.

"That's what you work hard for and train for: that opportunity to help your team out," Siegel said. "Confidence-wise, that kick really helped. Now I know I've done it before, and I'm capable of doing it again."

Just as important, but not as celebrated, is the life of a punter. Generally, a punter's appearance is greeted with a groan by fans after the offense fails to produce a first down.

And unless the punt goes exceptionally far, a punter is rarely given an ovation. But should a

punt get shanked off the side of a foot and travel 15 yards out of bounds, or worse, get blocked, you better believe the punter is going to hear about it.

So goes the thankless job of new Oregon punter Jose Arroyo. The junior transfer from Pasadena City College wasn't surprised that people were upset about his two blocked punts against Stanford on Oct. 20, but knows that some things are out of his control.

"It gets you mad when they're blocked, but those punts are forgotten about," Arroyo said. "You can't do anything about that now. All you can do is learn and build from that."

Learning has been an important part of Siegel and Arroyo's first year as members of the Ducks. Both are starters in positions that were up for grabs through the spring season, the summer workouts and into the fall camp.

"Those guys have been a pleasant surprise because the special teams was our biggest question mark coming into the season for us," Oregon tight end Justin Peelle said. "And they've exceeded expectations and done a really good job."

Statistically, the Ducks don't rank near the top of the conference in their kicking game.

In fact, Oregon's opponent Saturday, Arizona State, is four spots above the Ducks in punting in Pacific-10 Conference rankings and six notches

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Photos by Adam Amato Emerald

The Associated Press Top 25

1. Miami	(6-0)
2. Nebraska	(9-0)
3. Oklahoma	(7-1)
4. Florida	(6-1)
5. Texas	(7-1)
6. Michigan	(6-1)
7. Tennessee	(5-1)
8. Oregon	(7-1)
9. UCLA	(6-1)
10. Stanford	(5-1)
11. Washington	(6-1)
12. Virginia Tech	(6-1)
13. BYU	(8-0)
14. Florida State	(5-2)
15. Maryland	(7-1)
16. Washington State	(7-1)
17. South Carolina	(6-2)
18. Georgia	(5-2)
19. Syracuse	(7-2)
20. Purdue	(5-1)
21. Illinois	(6-1)
22. North Carolina	(5-3)
23. Georgia Tech	(5-2)
24. Texas A&M	(7-1)
25. Colorado	(6-2)

USA Today/ESPN Coaches' Top 25

1. Miami	(6-0)
2. Nebraska	(9-0)
3. Florida	(6-1)
4. Oklahoma	(7-1)
5. Texas	(7-1)
6. Michigan	(6-1)
7. Tennessee	(5-1)
8. BYU	(8-0)
9. Oregon	(7-1)
10. Washington	(6-1)
11. UCLA	(6-1)
12. Virginia Tech	(6-1)
13. Stanford	(5-1)
14. Florida State	(5-2)
15. Purdue	(5-1)
16. Maryland	(7-1)
17. Texas A&M	(7-1)
18. Illinois	(6-1)
19. Washington State	(7-1)
20. South Carolina	(6-2)
21. Georgia Tech	(5-2)
22. Syracuse	(7-2)
23. Georgia	(5-2)
24. Clemson	(5-2)
25. Colorado	(6-2)

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the edge there after their 49-42 win at Autzen Stadium. But there's one more catch: If Washington State wins out, thus creating a three-way tie at the top, Oregon would go to the Fiesta Bowl because 1) The Cougs played Montana State and therefore would not have as many quality nonconference wins, and 2) Out of the three teams, Oregon was the last to go to the Rose Bowl (Stanford went in 2000 and WSU in

1998) and so would be heading to Tempe.

Much will be decided this weekend, in what should be the most exciting weekend of the year (heck, California might win a game). And if you take anything anyway from Pac-10 football (or from this column), just remember one thing:

Assume nothing.

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