



Tom Patterson Emerald

Oregon lost the Civil War in Corvallis last year despite the efforts of Maurice Morris (9).

UO, OSU find wins with home crowds

■ The home team has won the past four Wars, and Oregon knows the Autzen advantage will help on Saturday

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

Four years. Four Civil Wars.

Four victories for the home team.

The story has been the same for the past four Civil War games, and the Oregon players can only hope it stays the same this year. The games are hard-fought. They are emotional.

The home team wins.

"Lately, the home field advantage has been significant, and certainly we hope that stays in place," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "We're happy to be playing here."

The trend started in 1997 with a 48-30 Duck win in Eugene. The year 1998 marked the double-overtime thriller in Corvallis, and the year the Beavers upset a powerful Duck squad.

In 1999, Oregon toppled Oregon State to earn a berth in the Sun Bowl. Last season, the Beavers shattered Oregon's dreams for an outright Pacific-10 Conference title and a trip to the Rose Bowl. Oregon State won the game 23-13 in Corvallis.

For obvious reasons, the Oregon players are happy the game is in Eugene this season.

"It's tough to play in Corvallis," senior tight end Justin Peelle said. "So it's nice for our seniors to go out playing OSU at home."

Those Oregon seniors — 13 in all — will take the field for the last time Saturday. They include stars Joey Harrington, Peelle and Rashad Bauman. On the other side of the ball, Oregon State standouts Ken Simonton and Jonathan Smith will also play their final regular-season games.

"It's nice for a lot of us seniors to play our last game here at Autzen," senior defensive tackle Zach Freiter said.

Bauman said he looks forward to playing the Civil War at home, but said he knows that in the end, either team could win.

"It's always good to play at home," Bauman said. "I want to play at home because it's my last game here. But all that's backseat stuff. The best team on that day is going to win the game."

Part of the reason the teams switch wins could be the revenge factor. This season, especially, the Ducks will be looking to avenge last season's embarrassing loss in Corvallis.

"After last year, we've got to come out and finish the job," Peelle said.

In the Civil War, it seems, the bounce of the ball can surely affect the game's outcome.

"It's gone both ways in the past few years, and we're just going to go out there and do the best we can to win it this year," Freiter said.

In 1998, the ball bounced the Beavers' way. Smith led a last-minute scoring drive to tie the game and send it to overtime. In the overtime period, Oregon State fans thought they had won the game when Akili Smith failed to convert a fourth-down play. But pass interference was called, and the Ducks sent the game to a second overtime. When Simonton rushed for the winning touchdown in that second extra period, Beaver fans rushed the field.

"There is a certain intensity and energy about this game every year regardless of what's at stake," Bellotti said. "The team that channels that energy and focuses on their play will win."

This season there is much at stake. The Ducks need a win to keep their hopes — slim as they are — alive for the Rose Bowl. The Beavers need a win to become bowl-eligible and earn a trip to the postseason for the third straight year.

The stakes are high. Oregon can only hope that history repeats itself.

"It's always good to have something to feed off of," Peelle said. "In a rivalry game it's always good to have every advantage you can get."

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