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continued from page 3B

On Nov. 3, in their game against USC, the Beavers could not come away with a win in the overtime period. Head coach Dennis Erickson considers that game the turning point in their season.

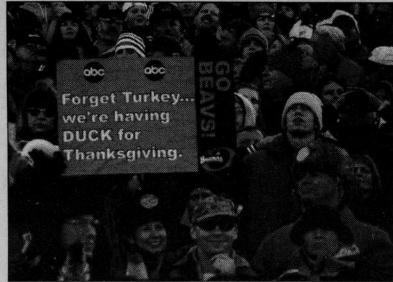
"We went on the road and dominated a football game, and that's why it was such a tough loss for us," Erickson said.

From that point on, Erickson said, the Beavers turned their season around. Wins against Washington on Nov. 10 and Northern Arizona the next week were powered by an offensive explosion. Oregon State's 49 points against the Huskies is the most the team has tallied all season. The following week, the Beavers posted 45 against Division II Northern Arizona.

Even if the Beavers continue with the momentum they have gathered and become the spoiler Saturday, the chance of prolonging their season is slim. The Pac-10 has five guaranteed bowl slots, and six teams currently sit above Oregon State.

The key for the Beavers on Saturday will be to establish their running game, led by tailbacks Ken Simonton, Steven Jackson and Patrick McCall. Erickson said that a combination of things have contributed to the team's offensive resurgence, including better play from the offensive line and big plays from wide receivers James Newson and Cole Clasen.

A sophomore, Newson has been a frequent target for Smith's passes, and is coming off a seven-catch, 190 yard-game against Northern Arizona. Tight end Tim Euhus has



Thomas Patterson Emeral

Oregon hopes to avenge a 23-13 loss to Oregon State last year in Corvallis, where the Ducks where met with a hostile crowd at Reser Stadium.

also been a reliable target for Smith, averaging 13.1 yards per catch.

The Beavers have run up a total of 1,018 offensive yards (497 of which came against Washington) in the past two games.

In the game against the Huskies, quarterback Jonathan Smith was 18-for-28, for 317 yards and two touchdowns. He now seems to be returning to his form of the previous year, when he lead the Beavers to an 11-1 record. But he knows he will face a tough test at Autzen Stadium.

"We can't turn the ball over," Smith told the Corvallis Gazette-Times. "You've got to try to keep the crowd out of it. Obviously, we're going to have to score, because they're going to score some points. They've got a great offense over there."

The Beavers will need both

Smith and Simonton to step up. In Simonton's previous three games against the Ducks, he has rushed for an average of 111 yards and for seven total touchdowns.

Along with the two well-known offensive threats, Oregon State has 15 other seniors on the team, including McCall, linebacker James Allen, defensive end Kyle Rosselle, free safety Jake Cookus — who had three interceptions last year off Harrington — and tight end Mark Walsh.

With the help of these graduating seniors, Erickson hopes his team can maintain its high level of play.

"Hopefully, we can play like we did against Washington this Saturday," he said. "But it's been an upand-down year."

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