

Preview

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struggled early in the season. Stanford was blown out in consecutive weeks by Arizona State, Notre Dame and Washington State, but the Cardinal have since beaten both Arizona and UCLA.

But more than focusing on Stanford, Bellotti is worried about keeping his own team from falling apart at the seams after consecutive losses to ASU and Southern California.

"The reality is we're 6-2. There's only two teams in the conference that have one more victory than we do; this team could win 10 games this year, which has only been done one time in the history of the school, and we're still ranked 16th in the nation," Bellotti said. "There's a lot of things they need to look at and realize, we're not 0-2, we're 6-2."

The Ducks' defense — especially the secondary — has been the subject of the most criticism after giving up 536 passing yards to the Sun Devils' Andrew Walter and 448 yards, along with five touchdowns, to USC's Carson Palmer.

So Oregon secondary coach Mike Gillhamer attempted to douse the fire by showing his cornerbacks and safeties a tape. The tape featured all the secondary's negative plays against USC, spliced together in a big, macabre movie.

"To see all the negative plays from one game is pretty hard. You know the next play is going to be negative, you just hope it's not you," free safe-

ty Keith Lewis said. "But everybody knows they messed up at some point in that game. We just need to pick our heads up and keep going."

"Right now it's about pride more than anything. Everybody's trying to get their pride up," Lewis said. "It's one of those things — you're going to be ripped to pieces."

The Oregon offense isn't attempting to lay all the blame on the defense, by any means. The offense sputtered against USC in the crucial third quarter, as Fife completed less than half his passes for the game and running back Onterio Smith was held to less than 100 yards rushing for the first time this season. That may have been because of a small knee injury Smith suffered in the second quarter Saturday — an injury that may keep Smith from starting against Stanford.

But despite all the adversity they're facing this week, the Ducks are fired up to play the Cardinal.

"Everybody wants to kick us because they think we're down, but we're coming up swinging this week," Wrighster said. "Of course, nobody's happy about losing two games in a row. Nobody likes the taste of one loss, never mind two. But everybody's anxious to get an opportunity to get another victory."

Fife put it another way. "We talked about being in shock after (the loss to USC)," Fife said.

"But now the shock's over, and it's time to get back to business, start kicking ass again."

Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com.



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