

GAME DAY



Oregon Daily Emerald



No. 5 Washington State vs. No. 15 Oregon

Rivalry weeks

Oregon begins three weeks of Northwest rivalries with a trip to Pullman, Wash., to face the Washington State Cougars

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

Pullman, Wash., is a place most teams would rather not play. Washington State, led by quarterback Jason Gesser and undefeated in conference play, is a team most others would rather not face.

With only three weeks remaining in the season and bowl hopes built up or shattered every week, it's a situation most teams would rather not think about.

But not the Oregon Ducks. The Oregon football team is taking all those factors — a road game in a hostile environment against a top-caliber team — and using them to its advantage.

"It's fun being the underdog," Duck free safety Keith Lewis said. "We're ready to show what this program is all about."

The Ducks will indeed be the underdog to a team that entered the season with high expectations and has, so far, matched those hopes. The Cougars are 8-1 overall, 5-0 in the Pacifio-10 Conference and in control of the race for the Rose Bowl. Washington State's only loss came at the hands of now-No. 3 Ohio State in the third week of the season. The Buckeyes are still undefeated.

"It's going to take everything we've got to beat these guys," linebacker David Moretti said.

Moretti and the rest of the Oregon defense will be under scrutiny Saturday as the Ducks face the conference's second-best offense. The Cougars average almost 432 yards per game on offense, along with 35 points per contest. The Ducks' defense is allowing 372 yards per game on defense, third-worst in the conference behind only Arizona and California.

"Obviously Washington State presents some matchup problems for us," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "We're going to need a combination of pressure and coverage and disguising coverages to keep them off balance."

Those disguising coverages will be focused on disrupting Gesser, the Cougars' senior quarterback and one of the top signal-callers in the nation. After the Ducks gave up 536 and 448 yards to Arizona State's Andrew Walter and USC's Carson Palmer, respectively, the Ducks will have to face a quarterback
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KICKOFF AT 12:30 P.M. ■ MARTIN STADIUM ■ SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2002 ■ TV: ABC

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Gess who?

Jason Gesser has always been good, but now he's a legitimate Heisman hopeful for the first-place Cougars
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November bowling

With each passing week, the Ducks and everybody else get closer to knowing which bowl they're headed for.
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