

War

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Pacific-10 Conference-leading defense. Much of the Ducks' offensive woes start at the quarterback position, where Jason Fife has struggled and was even replaced by Kellen Clemons in the third quarter of last Saturday's loss to Washington.

"He's having some situations now that are probably the result of some inexperience," Bellotti said. "Overall, he's done a great job and been a great leader."

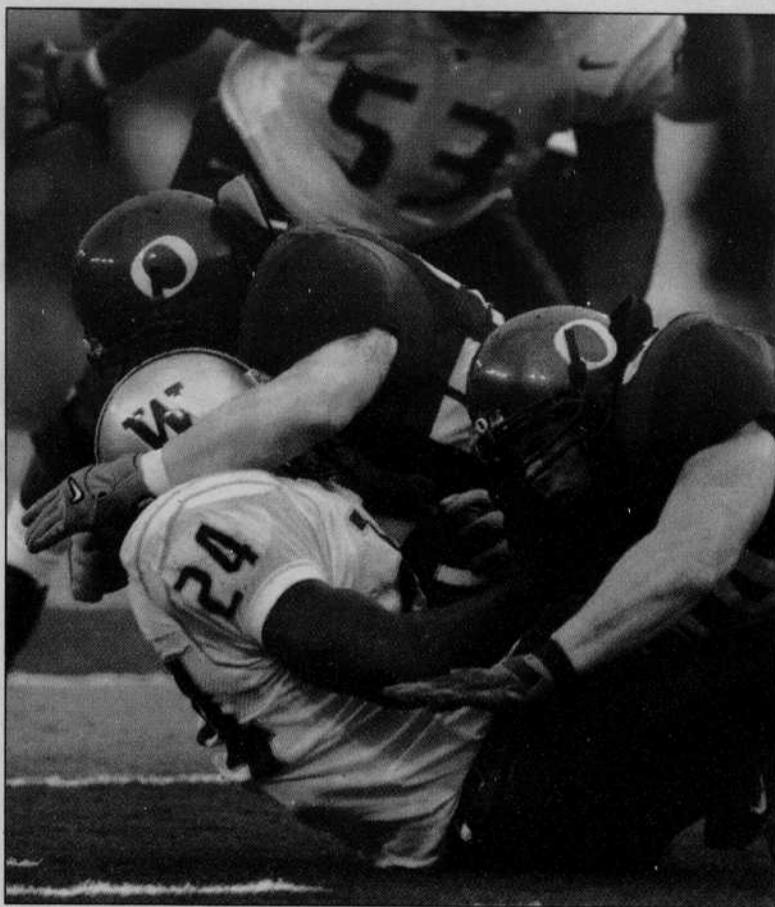
Bellotti said he had no plans to replace Fife again Saturday. But Fife isn't the only offensive question. Onterio Smith is out of the contest with a knee injury, and the Ducks will turn to freshman Terrence Whitehead and redshirt sophomore Ryan Shaw at tailback.

Then there's the question of Oregon's normally-steady special teams, which have sputtered in many ways recently.

"There's a challenge on special teams for us to win that battle," Bellotti said. "That's obviously the one area we can say, here we have a great place-kicker and our punter's doing a great job, and we have the return people to break a game open, so certainly we're looking to make a statement in that area."

On the Oregon State side of the ball, the Beavers will ride the legs of running back Steven Jackson and a stifling defense. The Oregon State defense is first in the Pac-10 in several categories including total defense.

Erickson said the game could very well be decided by defense, on either side of the ball.



Adam Amato Emerald

The Oregon defense, led by David Morretti (right) and Kevin Mitchell (top), will have to stop Steven Jackson and OSU to give the Ducks' sputtering offense a chance.

"When you get down to this time of year, defenses control a lot of what happens," Erickson said. "To me, it's like any game — turnovers and who plays the best defense is probably going to decide the game."

But according to McEwan, the Civil War is always about more than pluses, minuses, x's and o's.

It's about passion.

"There's a certain pride to it, owning the state of Oregon," McEwan said. "The emotion and intensity go up 10-plus."

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Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailymerald.com.



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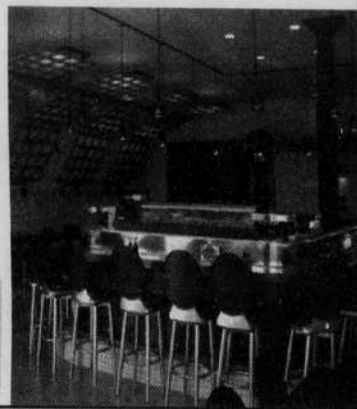
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