



# Ducks hope to create own thunder when Pack comes calling

Oregon returns to Eugene for its first home game of the season where the yellow stands and uniforms will illuminate Autzen

By **Mindi Rice**  
Senior Sports Reporter

The Oregon Ducks' home debut won't be fireworks and thunder, but coach Mike Bellotti and his team are looking for some lightning to open play at Autzen Stadium.

"We have to realize every team comes into Autzen Stadium because it is a great place to play and a great college environment," Bellotti said. "You get energized by that."

The Ducks have a streak of 10 consecutive home-opening wins that stretches back to 1993, when they defeated Montana 35-30.

Two of the eight opening wins during Bellotti's tenure have been against the Wolf Pack — 44-30 in 1996 and 36-7 in 2000.

During the time Bellotti has been at Oregon's helm, the Ducks have not lost a non-conference game at Autzen Stadium, an 18-game streak that began in the 1995 season.

"I want to win every game at home," Oregon center Dan Weaver said. "You've got to start it off winning the first one if you want to win all of them."

For Weaver and 13 other seniors, this is also their final home opener at Autzen Stadium.

"It's just so much fun playing at home — the excitement, the crowd," Oregon linebacker Kevin Mitchell said. "It's a good feeling to know you're on familiar turf."

Oregon's marketing department is trying to expand that familiarity.

The University Bookstore and local Duck Shop outlets have shirts that proclaim "Lightning Strikes" across a bright yellow T-shirt. The marketing department's plan calls for a yellow sea of fans filling Autzen to the brim.

The "Lightning Strikes" shirts are available for \$7; \$1 from each shirt goes to Oregon's marching band

and cheerleaders.

The vision of yellow-clad fans matches the vision of yellow-clad players with new uniforms that made their football debut in Starkville, Miss., on Aug. 30.

"A lot of people like (the new uniforms)," Oregon wide receiver Samie Parker said. "I think people (on the team) feel good in them, they're saying it makes them feel fast. Certain colors make people seem faster than they actually are and I think a lot of people thought the yellow made them feel fast."

If the Ducks felt fast against Mississippi State, it's because they were.

In the 42-34 victory, the Ducks' top three rushers — Ryan Shaw, Terrence Whitehead and Chris Vincent — combined for 209 yards.

Quarterbacks Kellen Clemens and Jason Fife combined for 358 yards and four touchdowns that prompted several Bulldog fans to leave after the first quarter.

"It's kind of easy to start off playing away just because the expectations aren't really any," Mitchell said. "We're away, all we have is each other — the teammates and the coaches — and we're the underdogs playing on someone else's field."

The underdog role and the boisterous Mississippi State fans added to Oregon's first-game motivation to help the Ducks grab their first victory of the season.

"Last week, our players were energized by the cow bells and the excitement of the crowd (at Davis Wade Stadium)," Bellotti said. "It's a great field."

Similar things that made Mississippi State's field a great place to play for the Ducks also make Autzen a lively atmosphere at every game. With the addition of lightning yellow in the stands, Autzen will look even more Duck-ed out for the season's first home game.

Saturday's festivities include the formal dedication of Autzen's expansion and renovation.

Contact the senior sports reporter at [mindirice@dailyemerald.com](mailto:mindirice@dailyemerald.com).

Center Dan Weaver is Oregon's only senior to lead an inexperienced offensive line after the loss of offensive guard Joey Forster.  
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