

Special teams play special role in Oregon victories

Oregon's special teams could play a pivotal role against the Cougars

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

When freshman wide receiver Jordan Carey got his arms wrapped around the ball for Oregon's final score against Michigan, he couldn't hear much of anything through the uproar of 59,000-plus fans in Autzen Stadium.

"It was so loud, it was almost silent," Carey said. "I couldn't hear anything; I just saw teammates running towards me. I was so excited, being a freshman and everything, you just dream of making plays like that."

Carey, who is listed as a third-string wide receiver on Oregon's depth chart, was in on the play to act as a punt blocker, but ended up being the hero.

The group of players who make up special teams all walked away as heroes in the Michigan victory as they accounted for two touchdowns — including the 61-yard punt return by cornerback Steven Moore — that gave Oregon a 15-point cushion going into halftime.

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti preached to his team before the game about the impact special teams could have, and it paid off. Heading into the Washington State game, the attention to detail will not stop.

"It's even more important this week, because Washington State has great special teams people," Bellotti said. "Their kicker (Drew) Dunning, their punter (Kyle) Basler, those guys are very good, if not some of the best in the conference. They have a dangerous return man; Sammy Moore is scary. Every game, special teams are a huge key for us so it never diminishes."

Moore will be a player that Oregon will need to target, as the senior leads the Pacific-10 Conference in kickoff



Jordan Carey (8) celebrates with teammates after recovering a blocked punt for a touchdown in the Ducks' 31-27 win against Michigan.

Mark McCambridge
Senior Photographer

returns and is ranked sixth nationally, averaging 33.71 yards per return.

"Sammy Moore is a dangerous return man," said Robin Ross, Oregon special teams coordinator. "He's dangerous anytime he has the ball in his hands."

Washington State's kickers pose a threat: Dunning leads kickers in the conference in scoring, averaging 11.8 points per game, and Basler ranks third in the conference, averaging 44.8 yards per punt.

Oregon punter Paul Martinez has

just four games of experience, yet the freshman kicked a 61-yard punt against the Wolverines on Saturday.

"It just kind of happened; I didn't hit it right on my foot," Martinez said. "It hit the left side, (so) it keeps the nose of the ball up and hits on the back end of it and rocks the ball a little forward."

Martinez ranks at the bottom of the conference in punting average at 39.6 yards per kick, the only player averaging below 40. The net average for the Ducks is 38.6, as Oregon has allowed

a one-yard return average. That means Oregon has established great field position for its defense.

"He keeps working at it and he gets better every week," Ross said of Martinez. "Special teams create the field position. The last couple of weeks we've benefited from field position."

Even Washington State head coach Bill Doba is aware of Oregon's recent success on special teams and that the Cougars will have to be just as sharp when it comes to the details.

"That could be the determining fac-

tor in this game," Doba said.

There is no doubt that Doba has made his team aware of the positives that come when special teams succeed; examples like Sammy Moore's 97-yard kick return against Colorado stand out.

"It's a good test for our special teams," Martinez said. "As long as everyone sticks to their assignments, we'll do fine."

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com.

Cougars haven't missed a step with Doba at the helm

Head coach Bill Doba has helped Washington State continue winning as it defends the conference title

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

The first time Bill Doba took a head coaching position in football was 1965.

He was in his mid 20s and a busy man also serving as the assistant basketball coach and a math teacher at Angola High in Angola, Ind.

Fast forward to the present to find a more mature head coach, slightly aged into his early 60s, who has been inducted into two Hall of Fames, raised three children and has a coaching tenure spanning more than four decades.

Doba took control as Washington State

head coach on Dec. 18, 2002, replacing former head coach Mike Price after the latter's departure to Alabama.

Doba now must go back to the days of being 25 years old and remember what it is like to be a head coach for the first time. For the past 25 years, the South Bend, Ind., native has been an assistant coach.

"It's a different atmosphere," Doba said. But he hasn't forgotten the most important thing to a team defending its Pacific-

10 Conference championship: winning. Under Doba's leadership, the Cougars have jumped out to a 3-1 start, only losing to Notre Dame in an overtime game decided by a field goal.

And thus far, the players remain confident, especially quarterback Matt Kegel, in what Doba can do for a program that advanced to the Rose Bowl in 2003 for the



Doba

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