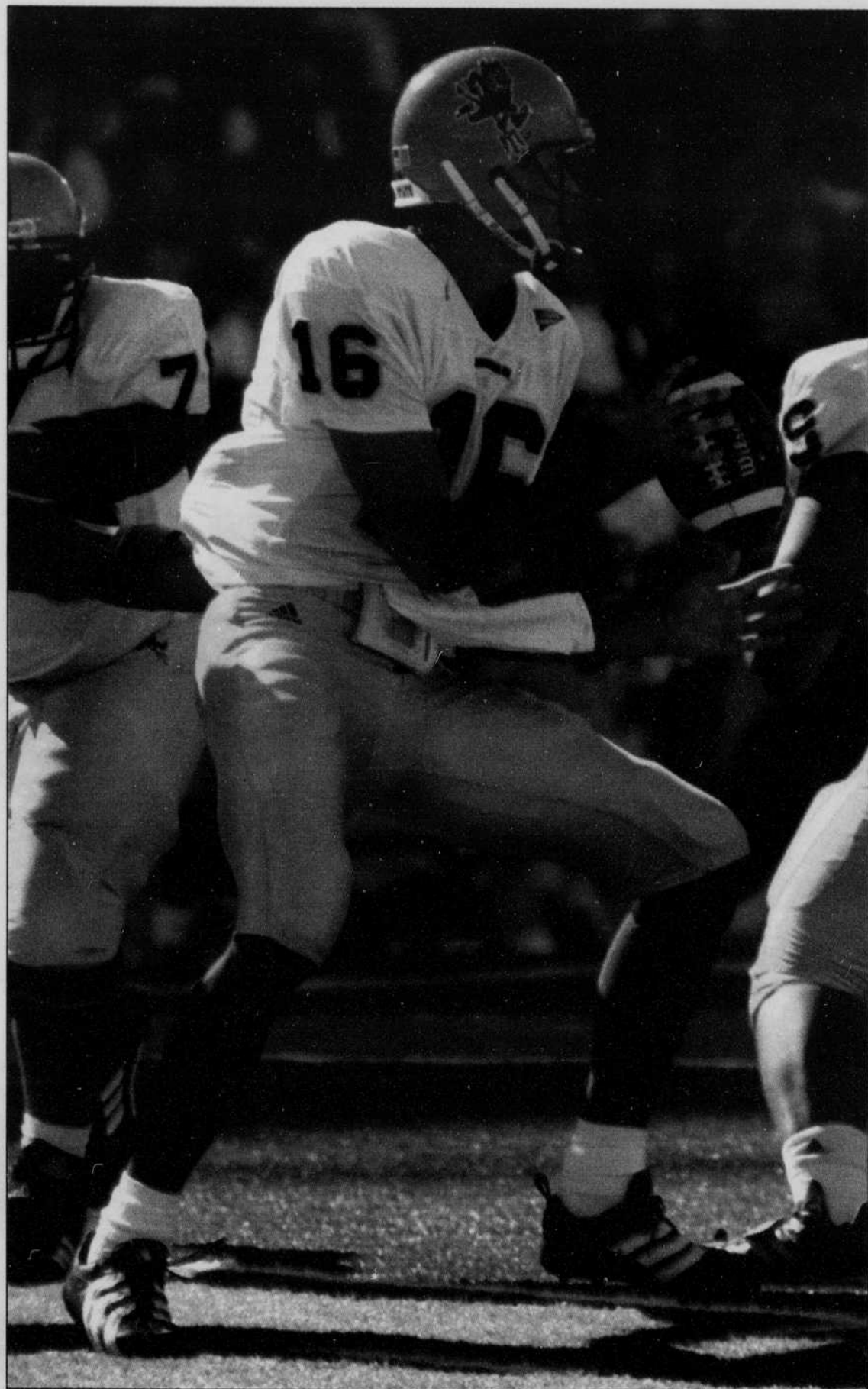




Arizona State quarterback Andrew Walter has thrown for 1,197 yards and nine touchdowns through five games this season.

Walter slumping during Sun Devils' three-game slide

Andrew Walter finished with 536 passing yards against the Ducks last season at Autzen

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

What does one get for the man who seemingly has everything?

In Andrew Walter's case, a fresh start Saturday with the Sun Devils.

Walter lit up the Ducks for 536 passing yards in Arizona State's 45-42 win last season at Autzen Stadium, skyrocketing the Sun Devils' presence in the Pacific-10 Conference.

But that was last year. This year has been anything but smooth sailing for Walter.

"Last year against Oregon, to play at their stadium and be down by 21 and come back to win was exciting," Walter said. "This year, we're not as much of a big-play offense. I think we have the capability, but so far we haven't done it."

The big play offense that netted the Sun Devils almost 600 total yards against the Ducks last season has become almost dormant in the team's last three games. Arizona State has lost to Iowa, Oregon State and USC after starting out with wins over Northern Arizona and Utah State.

Walter has suffered during that losing streak. He has thrown three touchdown passes while being picked off five times, including a season-high three times against the Beavers.

His farthest throw against Iowa was just 16 yards, and he has completed 49 percent of his pass attempts.

Walter's fall from grace has easily coincided with Arizona State's slump.

"I would say Andrew and myself and (quarterbacks coach) Mark Helfrich have much higher expectations for Andrew than anyone else," Arizona State

head coach Dirk Koetter said. "Andrew played much, much better against USC."

When Walter capitalized on Oregon's defensive downfalls last season — throwing for the 536 yards and four touchdowns — it was a signal to the rest of the country that he was the real deal.

He ended last season throwing for 28 touchdowns and 3,877 passing yards. Those totals came in 14 games, and he started 10.

"No one wants to win more than Andrew Walter," Koetter said. "He's working as hard as he can. As I look around, I'm not seeing any quarterbacks I'd trade him for. I like that guy on my team."

Walter's ineffectiveness this season is no more than a smoke screen for the Ducks. After Walter passed for more than 300 yards last week against USC, Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti is preparing for him and the Sun Devil offense as though there is no change from last season.

"We're certainly very aware that he is a quality quarterback," Bellotti said. "Certainly, given the time, he can rip you to shreds."

"I thought he was very effective against USC. He was scary early on. Meanwhile, he threw for 300 yards and (USC) is a good football team."

The Ducks have given up big passing days to Michigan and Washington State this season. With Walter healthy, he could put Arizona State on that list.

However, he's going to have to do it against a defense that will be changing as the game wears on.

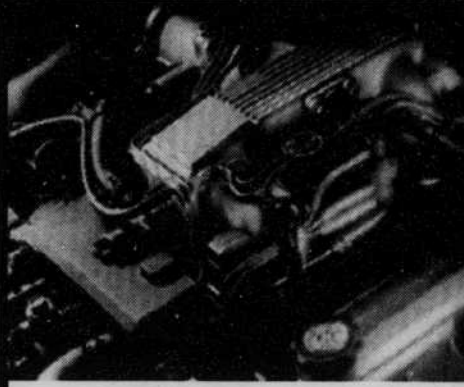
"What we need to do is make sure we vary the coverage," Bellotti said. "We will bring pressure, but we will vary the types of pressure that we bring."

Contact the sports editor
at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

ANDREW WALTER

Before Arizona State: Walter was named an honorable mention All-American by USA Today as a senior while at Grand Junction (Colo.) High School. He lettered three times in football, twice in basketball and once in track and field.

At Arizona State: Became the Sun Devils' first 3,000-yard passer when he threw for 3,877 yards last season. He also threw for 28 touchdown passes last season, tying him for sixth all-time on the Pac-10's single season list. That mark also places him second all-time on ASU's list.



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