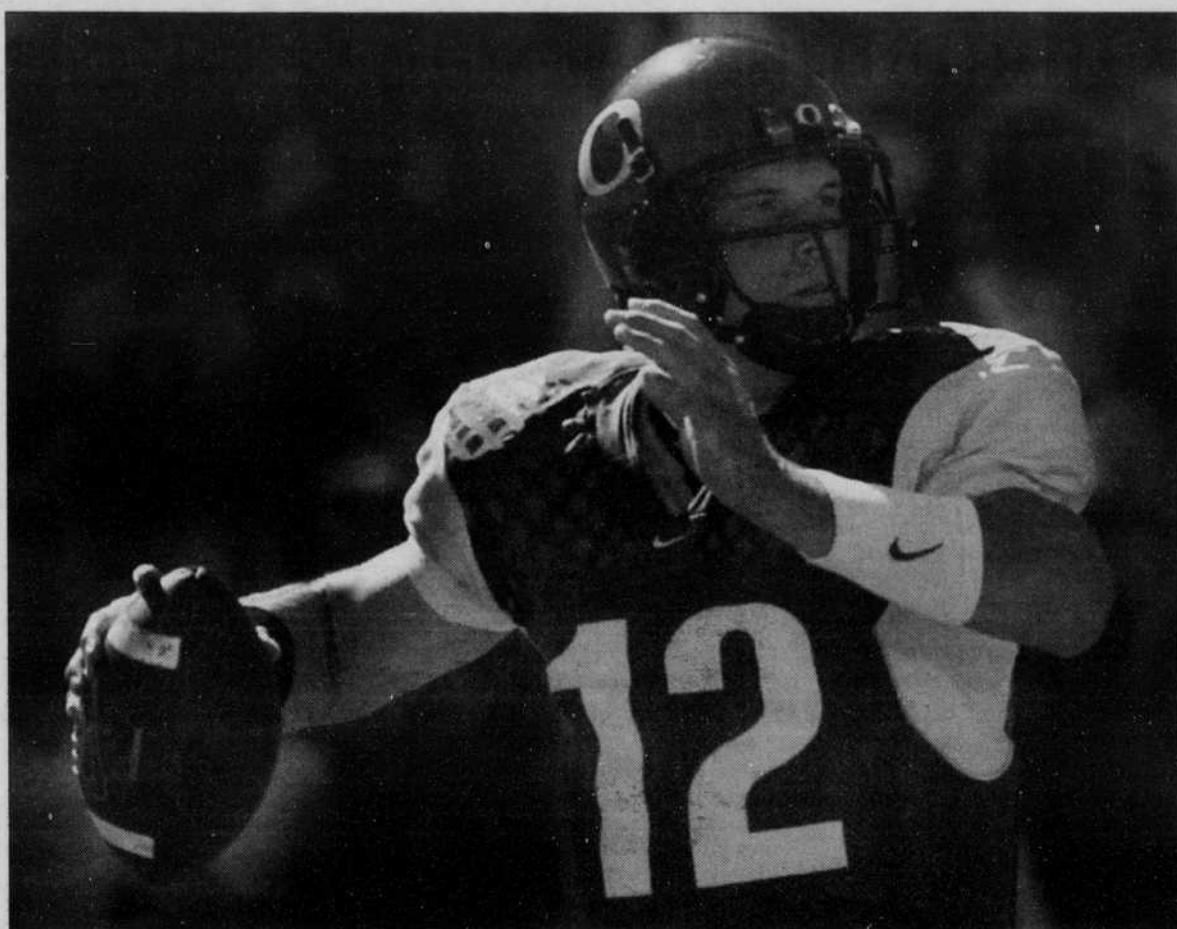




Adam Amato Photo Editor

Senior Jason Fife has taken over the backup role at quarterback after starting his junior year. Fife has passed for 627 yards this season.

No. 1 or No. 2?

The Ducks expect their quarterback rotation to work again despite recent flaws

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

They knew entering the season that there wasn't going to be a clear-cut answer.

But there's no way that senior Jason Fife or sophomore Kellen Clemens could have imagined the quarterback rotation would last this long. Or that it would take a roller coaster-type course throughout the season.

"The rotation started off great for us, and then it kind of died off, so I don't know what the coaches are expecting," Fife said earlier this week. "Kellen and I are both expecting to play like we always have. We're just going to prepare ourselves this week."

As Fife said, the rotation is going to continue when Stanford visits Autzen Stadium on Saturday.

Both have said recently — and in the past — that they would ultimately prefer to be the full-time quarterback. Clemens has started all seven games this season and received the bulk of the playing time through the first four games.

Fife has come on more regularly during the team's three-game losing streak, although neither quarterback has played well during that span.

In the four losses, the duo has combined for 10 interceptions. Seven of those came at the hands of Washington State when the Cougars beat up on the Ducks, 55-16.

"The Washington State game, we had some poor luck," Clemens said of the Ducks. "The Utah game, we didn't execute. Arizona State played well, and I made some bad decisions, personally, that hurt us early."

Both were politically correct this week in giving ultimate control to head coach Mike Bellotti and his staff as to whether the rotation would continue. Bellotti said it would, although not all the par-

ticulars will be set until game time.

"I don't see any immediate change in the rotation," Bellotti said. "I think the rotation is a function of their performance and game plan."

Bellotti had planned to go to a single-quarterback system before the 59-14 loss to Arizona State on Oct. 18. Clemens started the game, but his first pass was picked off and returned for a 50-yard touchdown by Jamar Williams.

Chris McKenzie got his hands on Clemens' next throw, which led to another Arizona State touchdown.

Fife came in for Clemens at that point, but didn't complete a pass until the waning moments of the first half.

For the game, the two combined to pass for 127 yards on nine completions in 26 attempts.

"We've just got to get back on top of things and get everything moving in the right direction," wide receiver Demetrius Williams said. "Both of them have their times when they

Turn to **QB**s, page 6B

Oregon defense susceptible, but on the cusp of big plays

The Ducks' defense has been successful against the run, but has been burned by the pass

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

If only the forward pass had not been introduced to the game of football.

Entering Oregon's game Saturday against Stanford, the Ducks' defense is looking for a strong showing after allowing more than 50 points in two of its last three outings.

The defense has been solid against the run, allowing 83 yards per game, the third lowest total in the Pacific-10 Conference. But when opponents have gone to the air, the Ducks have been vulnerable. Oregon is last in the conference in pass defense, allowing 289.7 yards per game.

While pundits have been quick to point fingers at defensive backs for the defense's shortcomings, Oregon secondary coach John Neal said it's

not entirely on their shoulders to stop an opponent's passing game.

"It's not four guys that have to stop all the situations when the ball's in the air," Neal said. "It's a bit of a team concept."

Defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti's system calls for eight or sometimes nine men in the box to shut down the run. The scheme was praised when Oregon held Colorado to 49 yards rushing in the 2002 Fiesta Bowl. But over the past two seasons, Oregon opponents have gone to the air and lit up the Ducks like a firecracker.

Senior cornerback Steven Moore said the scheme isn't the problem, instead citing a lack of big plays.

"You want to stop the run first, and that's part of the scheme," Moore said. "When you have two people back there by themselves, big plays happen sometimes. I don't blame that on the scheme, we just have to make plays when plays come our way."

The defense has failed to make the necessary plays of late. Two weeks ago, Arizona State quarterback An-

drew Walter torched the Ducks for 316 yards and three touchdowns. Two weeks prior to that, Washington State quarterback Matt Kegel threw for 242 yards and three touchdowns.

Neal said statistics and rankings won't be an issue for the Ducks if they start making the necessary adjustments.

"Maybe we can change some of those stats," Neal said. "Right now the only stat we're worried about is winning. If we can win, stats aren't important. You only worry about stats when you lose and you start studying them and wondering."

Instead of focusing on the negative, defensive players like tackle Igor Olshansky are trying to stay positive. Olshansky said everyone is doing their job in stopping the run. Now, he and the rest of the defensive line needs to help the secondary by getting more pressure on the quarterback.

"It's always our job to get to the quarterback," Olshansky said. "If we

Turn to **DEFENSE**, page 7B

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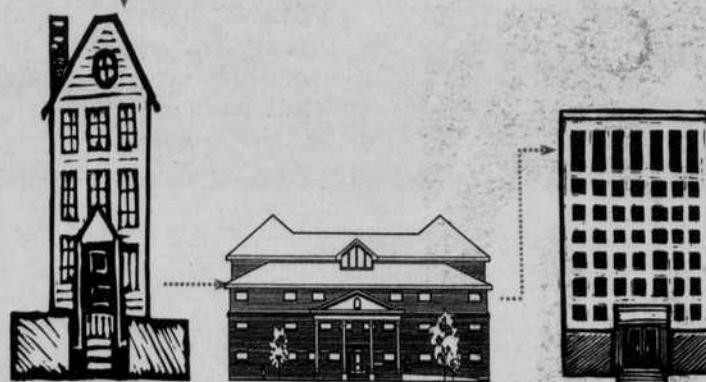
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