

Ducks receivers key Saturday

Opponents have said all season that the Oregon wide receivers are an underrated set of talents; a group that can break open any game with size and speed.

In other words, they're a group of talents that is the norm in the Pacific-10 Conference, a league where offense is concern No. 1 and defense takes a back seat. The likes of Samie Parker, Demetrius Williams and Co. bring a set of intangibles to the table that help the Oregon offense go 'round.

Lately, though, that hasn't been the case. Two significant plays against Washington State — Parker's drop in the end zone and Williams' fumble when he was wide open — opened the dam gates, and those gates have yet to be closed.

Against Utah and Arizona State, there were no remarkable plays from any member of the receiving corps. They didn't break the game open, but they didn't tear it down either.

That's the problem. With Parker's speed and Williams' sure hands, the Oregon receivers have every right to be known as game-breakers. They have the potential to turn teams on their heels, but that hasn't been the case in the past three games.

Against the Sun Devils, the team

combined for 127 yards in passing, just 62 yards of which came from Oregon receivers. The week before that, the Duck receivers had 13 catches against Utah but failed to find the end zone.

Against Washington State, well, we won't even go there considering that was a team loss.



Hank Hager
Behind the dish

During Oregon's win over Arizona earlier this season, TBS Superstation commentators asserted time after time that Parker was one of the fastest — if not the fastest — receivers in the nation.

He used that speed to an easy advantage at points during the year, and if he can do it again against Stanford, the Ducks will be well off.

With Kellen Taylor primed for a smaller role because of a broken wrist,

Parker, Williams and Marcus Maxwell will have to step up. Taylor was emerging as a third option in recent weeks, but when he hurt the wrist on a punt play against the Sun Devils, it set his season back a bit.

Maxwell has shown a bit more in recent games, especially a presence as a capable blocking receiver. He should see more action the rest of the season, although it will be important for the Ducks to utilize Taylor as much as they can. He is an emerging talent and will be an important member of the corps next season when Parker graduates and Williams begins his junior season.

The bad thing now for the Ducks is that the receivers must break out of their recent slump. The positive side — and it far outweighs the negative — is that the group is more than ready to do that. They are ready to get the offense back on track and clicking as it was before the three-game slide.

With Stanford's porous secondary coming into Autzen Stadium — the Cardinal rank ninth in the Pac-10 in pass defense — the Oregon receivers could very well have a career day.

They are capable of doing just that.

Contact the sports editor
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DEFENSE

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don't, then we're not doing our job."

Neal said everyone doing their job is exactly what the defense needs to help get Oregon back on track. He added that if the secondary can step up, the Ducks could get a win that could turn around their season.

"It's big because we're still looking for (a complete game)," Neal said.

"We haven't done it yet. (Against) Arizona, yeah, but they have their own problems."

"We need to get our confidence back. I think we lost some confidence two of the last three weeks. Right now we're dealing with our own problems, and we need a breakout game."

Neal said the secondary is very close to having that breakout game. He added that if the defense is going to get over the hump, it all comes

back to making plays.

"We're not making plays that we're capable of making, period," Neal said.

"But the thing is, we're right there to make a play. We can knock a pass down, we can intercept a ball, we can get in a better position in coverage. If we can do that, we'll beat Stanford."

Contact the sports reporter
at jonroetman@dailyemerald.com.



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Fresh Egg or Spinach Fettuccini: \$9.50
Add: Meatballs (beef & pork) \$4.00
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pasta

Cajun \$14.50
Grilled Chicken \$13.50
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