

Duck defense shines in third spring scrimmage

The defense makes the most of opportunities in an 84-77 victory in Friday's scrimmage at Autzen

By Brian Smith
Freelance Reporter

The third spring scrimmage for the Ducks was full of points, penalties, jaw-dropping moves and head-scratching miscues.

After all, the Ducks have only been practicing for less than a month.

That being said, the most concrete thing to take away from Friday's scrimmage at Autzen Stadium was the marked improvement on both sides of the ball.

"We talked about being aggressive on defense and I think we showed

that," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "I thought that there was more violent collisions and more of them and I like that. I think that our quarterbacks, certainly Kellen Clemens and Dennis Dixon, showed up and did some things."

The defense that dominated the Ducks' first scrimmage returned Friday, leading by as many as 20 in the first half. The highlight for the defense was the two safeties on consecutive possessions toward the latter part of the first half.

"I think that it was a good play by the defensive line to contain the pocket," Bellotti said. "Probably good coverage down the field, and I think it was not a very good play by our quarterbacks. You can never take a safety. Never."

Taking a safety was about the only thing quarterback Kellen Clemens

did wrong. Clemens looked to be in mid-season form, going 11 for 13 for 135 yards, including two touchdowns through the air and a 12-yard score on the ground.

"I feel like I improved this week, and that was very, very important," Clemens said. "But there are always things to work on."

Miscues proved to be the exception rather than the norm. Most of the scrimmage was highlighted by individuals making plays. Junior rover Aaron Gipson provided a spark and turned some heads with his second-half, 60-yard punt return for a touchdown.

Tight end Tim Day ran over and through most of the defense en route to five catches for 51 yards and a touchdown.

The most impressive performances, however, were delivered by a pair of freshmen. After a slow start, red-shirt wide receiver Garren Strong caught six balls for 96 yards and a pair of touchdowns. One of them was on a fade route that drew comparisons to two big-time Pacific-10 Conference receivers, Mike Williams of Southern California and Reggie Williams of Washington.

"Hopefully we can put that in our game plan," Strong said. "When we get down to the ten, that would be nice."

The other freshman to make an impression was quarterback Dennis Dixon. Dixon is already earning comparisons to former Oregon quarterback Akili Smith from both the coaches and media, with his ankle-breaking moves and running back speed.

"There is no question that Dixon is as athletic of a quarterback since

Akili Smith," Bellotti said. "He can make some things happen, and it's exciting to watch."

Dixon made more than a few defenders miss on a 40-yard scramble in the first half. Dixon hid behind linemen, made spin move after spin move and beat defensive backs to the sideline, drawing oohs and aahs from the spectators and general head-shaking from the media.

"I just act like I'm running from a dog," Dixon said. "That's what the defense is trying to do, they're trying to get me, but I'm trying to escape and get out of the pocket."

The future looks bright for the Ducks as they head into Saturday's annual spring game at 12:30 p.m. at Autzen.

Brian Smith is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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continued from page 7A

With the next pick at No. 36, Kansas City turned to Siavii because the coaches were fascinated with his athletic ability for his size at 6-foot-4 and 340 pounds.

"The way we looked at it was there's one thing he has that you can't coach — that's size," Kansas City head coach Dick Vermeil told Chiefs.com. "He's very inexperienced and very raw, (but) I think this kind of guy can develop into a dominating player one day."

Siavii, who started every game last season and finished with 43 tackles and two sacks, will be looked upon to improve a Kansas City defense, which ranked 30th in the league against the run, giving up more than 146 yards per game.

"I hope to have an effect on our defense," Siavii told Chiefs.com. "I hope to be a run-stopper in the middle and get some sacks."

The American Samoa native teamed up with Olshansky as part of an effective defensive line at Oregon

last season. They held running backs Steven Jackson of Oregon State and Michigan's Chris Perry to a combined 101 yards in two of Oregon's eight wins in 2003. Both Jackson and Perry were first-round picks Saturday at No. 24 to St. Louis and No. 26 to Cincinnati, respectively.

Siavii said he was happy to hear about going to Kansas City because it was a team he wanted to go to.

"When I came out there, I had a good time with the coaches," Siavii said. "I told the coaches and everybody there to 'get me, I need to be out there.'"

Siavii later was asked by Chiefs.com whether he believes he can come in and play right away.

"Don't be too surprised if it happens," he said. Two more former Ducks were selected on the second day of the draft. Wide receiver Samie Parker was taken in the fourth round at 105th overall to Kansas City. San Francisco chose safety Keith Lewis in the sixth round at the 198th pick overall.

Contact the sports reporter at alextam@dailyemerald.com.

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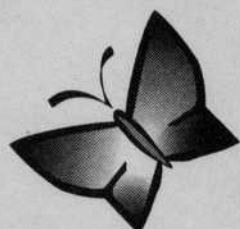
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