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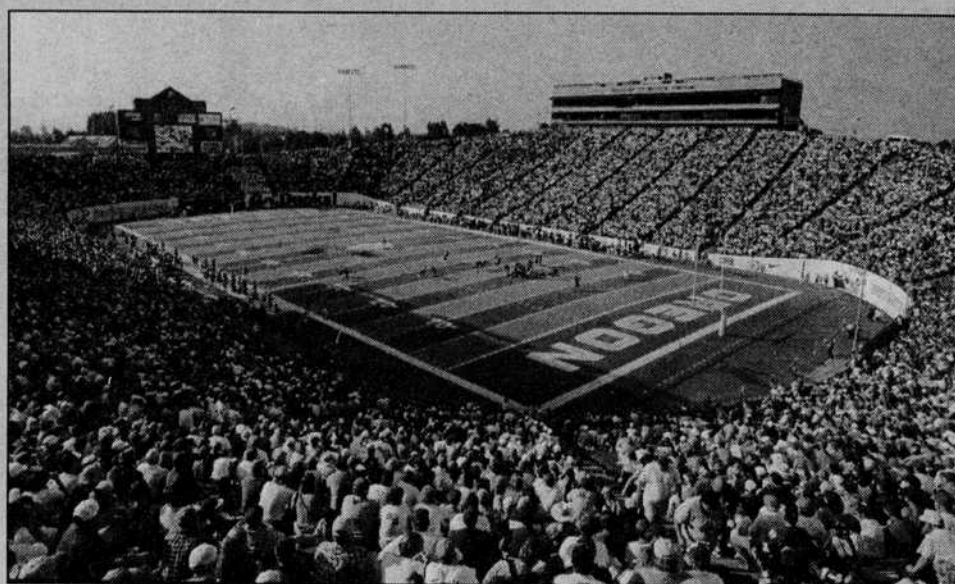


PHOTO BY ERIC EVANS

Autzen Stadium

The home for Oregon football, widely considered one of the nation's loudest stadiums, enters its 37th season.

Autzen Stadium was originally built in 1967 for \$2.5 million and moved Oregon's football games from its original home at Hayward Field.

Since its opening in 1967, the Ducks have enjoyed great success at home behind a strong fan base that has annually produced a tremendous home-field advantage. So far, Oregon has garnered a home-field record of 118-82-5

(.588 winning percentage), including a 32-4 record since the start of the 1997 campaign. The Ducks have gone undefeated at Autzen Stadium in four different seasons (1990, 1998-2000).

In 1995, the athletic department named the playing surface after the winningest head coach in Oregon history, Rich Brooks. The year before, Brooks led the Ducks to their first Pacific-10 Conference championship.

With Oregon's success in recent years, a \$90-million renovation project was put into action

two years ago. In 2002, Autzen Stadium increased its capacity from 41,698 to 54,000 fans and added 32 luxury boxes.

Students, fans and alumni have flocked to Autzen year after year as it has now sold out 25 consecutive games.

The first game ever played at Autzen Stadium was a loss to Colorado 17-13 on Sept. 23, 1967. The first win in the stadium's history occurred nearly a month later in a 31-6 victory over Idaho on Oct. 21, 1967.

— Alex Tam

Kickers: Missed PAT's cost wins for teams

Continued from page 12

LSU has had its own kicking issues. The Tigers found themselves a point short against Auburn because Ryan Gaudet missed a PAT. And Gaudet was only called on because starter Chris Jackson had already missed two extra points this season.

In the SEC East, Tennessee's James Wilhoit went from goat to hero against Florida. The first missed extra point of the sophomore's career left the Volunteers trailing 28-27 with less than four minutes left.

Like Vaughn, Wilhoit got a chance to redeem himself, but in a far more dramatic fashion. Wilhoit nailed a game-winning 50-yard field with 6 seconds left.

"Just because I made the field goal doesn't make me more important than anybody else," Wilhoit said. "We played 60 minutes, and we all made plays. It just happened that mine was the final one."

Other kickers weren't as fortunate as Wilhoit and Vaughn.

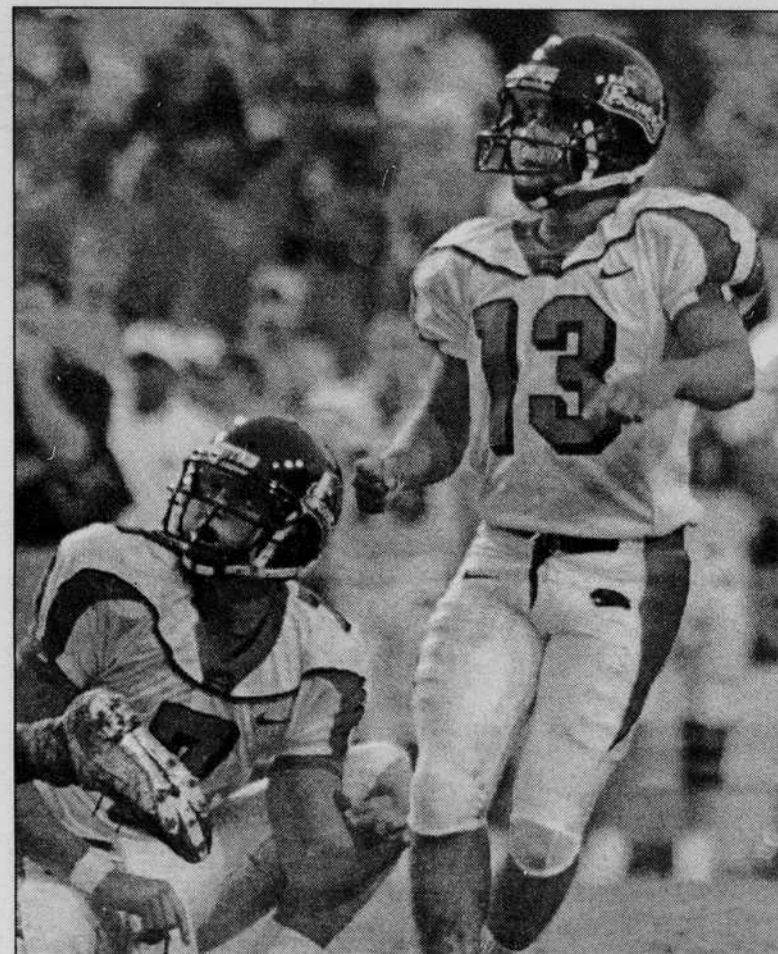
Arizona's Nick Folk missed from 43 yards early in the game, then from 47 with less than a minute left and the Wildcats lost to Wisconsin 9-7.

San Diego State's upset bid at Michigan was foiled by two failed field goal attempts in the fourth quarter by Garrett Palmer. The Aztecs lost 24-21, and the Wolverines avoided a second-straight loss that would have all but eliminated them from the national title hunt midway into September.

Michigan's rival Ohio State is still unbeaten thanks to the stellar kicking of Mike Nugent — and a miss by Marshall's Ian O'Connor two weeks ago.

The Buckeyes were in danger of being upset at home by Marshall in their second game, but O'Connor missed a 35-yard field goal with just more than three minutes left that would have given the Thundering Herd the lead. Nugent then won the game with a 55-yarder as time expired.

He followed that up by tying a school record with five field goals in a 22-14 win over North Carolina State on Saturday.



COURTESY | OSU ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

Oregon State kicker Alexis Serna missed three extra points in an overtime loss at Louisiana State on Sept. 4. Serna's rough day received considerable media attention.

"If you know us, you know our formula," Ohio State coach Jim Tressel said. "We tell our quarterbacks, 'When we get to a certain point, we've got the three. Don't foul up the three.'"

Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville doesn't see kickers getting worse, just a few high-profile mishaps.

"It's more than just the kicker. It starts with the snapper and holder, and everybody goes hand in hand. I don't think it's anything new," he said.

Ole Miss coach David Cutcliffe said all the close games and intense scrutiny might be taking a toll on kickers.

"I think it's probably tougher emotionally," said Cutcliffe, whose Rebels

won their first game on Saturday with a field goal in overtime against Vanderbilt. "Plenty of close games come down to is that place-kicker going to hit. It used to be a game of inches, now it's a game of toes."

Still, many coaches are reluctant to use one of their precious 85 scholarships on kickers, leading to more walk-ons handling the important duties.

And if the NFL is any indication, it would appear that reliable kickers are getting harder to find. Gary Anderson and Morten Andersen, both over 40, are still on NFL rosters.

Unfortunately, neither has any college eligibility left.

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