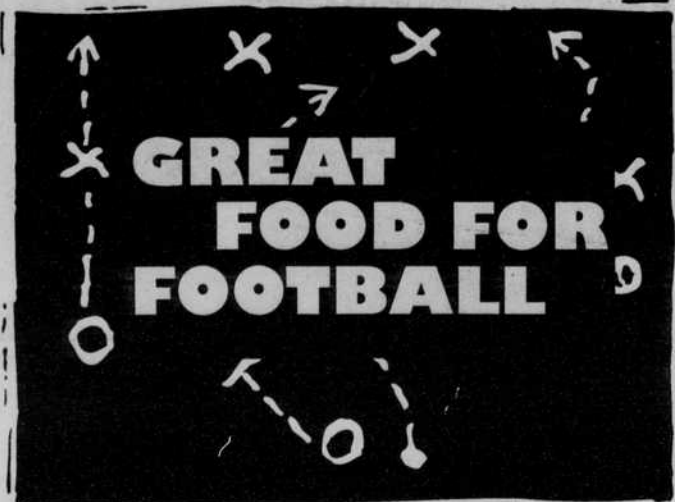




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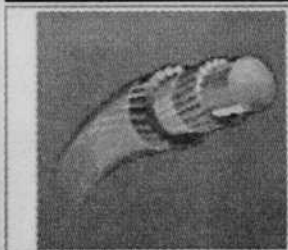
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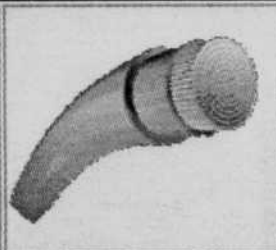


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Devan Long dives after a fumble in Oregon's 31-7 loss to Oklahoma Sept. 18. The junior defensive end is first on the team in solo tackles this season with 10 total, including four for a loss of 18 yards against the Sooners.

Oregon looking to turn its fortunes against Idaho

Winless Ducks hope to gain their first victory of the season

BY JON ROETMAN
SENIOR SPORTS REPORTER

Two weeks ago, Oregon's Saturday matchup with Idaho appeared to be no more than a glorified scrimmage.

Two weeks ago, Oregon was ranked No. 24 in the nation and was full of confidence.

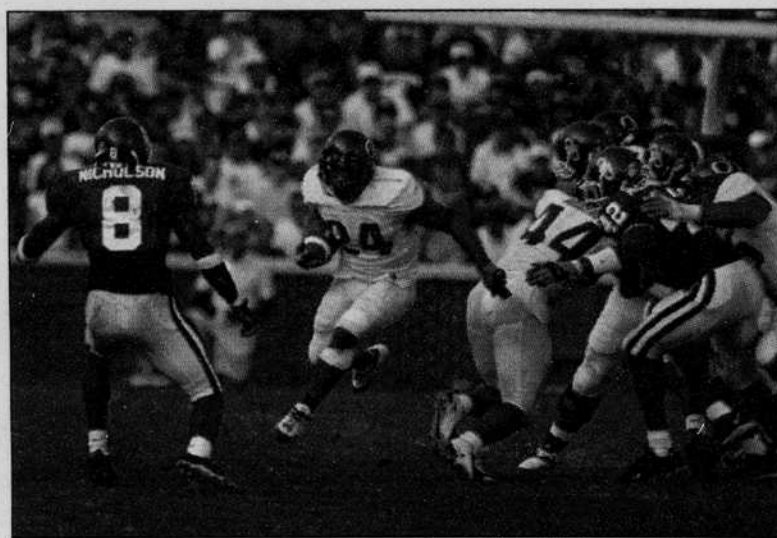
Two weeks and two losses later, that glorified scrimmage has become a must-win showdown with the Vandals. Oregon (0-2 overall) looks to avoid its first 0-3 start since 1982 when it faces Idaho (0-3, 0-1 Sun Belt Conference) at Autzen Stadium at 12:30 p.m.

After falling to Indiana and second-ranked Oklahoma, Oregon is in desperate need of something positive with its Pacific-10 Conference opener against Arizona State one week away. Head coach Mike Bellotti chose to downplay the importance of Saturday's contest with Idaho, however, saying the Ducks will approach the Vandals no differently than in past meetings.

"If we were 0-2, 1-1, or 2-0, I don't think this game would have any less or any more significance," Bellotti said. "Whatever our record was, each opportunity for us to win, to get a victory and then to get some momentum going into Pac-10 (play) would be the same. Pressure is what you make of it yourself."

"I think that the Idaho game has become a must win for us, but it's a must win every year."

While it is unlikely that Oregon will succumb to lowly Idaho, which has been outscored 128-22 this year, a season-opening upset loss at the hands of the Hoosiers suggests the Ducks won't



MARK MCCAMBRIDGE | PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior running back Terrence Whitehead cut through the Oklahoma defense for a team-high 66 yards on 13 carries. He leads the team with 113 yards rushing.

be looking past the Vandals.

"Whatever the point spread may be, whatever people perceive, you have to play the game," Bellotti said. "I think the Indiana game taught us a very tremendous lesson ... don't look past anyone."

Along with the obvious need for a win, Oregon has a lot of work to do offensively. Turnovers and red zone mishaps have limited the Ducks to 31 points in two games. While Oregon has had some success moving the ball, the Ducks have been unable to capitalize on many of their scoring opportunities, including two botched field goal attempts late in the Oklahoma contest.

Junior quarterback Kellen Clemens rebounded from a three-interception game against Indiana by completing 24-of-35 passes for 179 yards and a touchdown against the Sooners. While the numbers aren't mind boggling, the Burns native didn't turn the ball over and made good decisions.

Oregon's scoring chances should be plentiful Saturday, when the offense faces an Idaho defense that has allowed 114 points in two non-conference losses. Washington State tore through the Vandals for 286 rushing yards and 49 points last week; numbers that should certainly leave Terrence Whitehead and the rest of Oregon's talented running backs licking their chops.

"We need to pick it up big time," Whitehead said. "It really doesn't matter who we're playing against, I feel we can move the ball against anyone. We just have to finish the job."

Defensively, Oregon's 61 points allowed is misleading. Turnovers forced the Ducks to defend a short field on several occasions against Indiana, while Oklahoma ran up its point total late in the game. With these in mind, the defense is playing with pride and is looking to shut

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