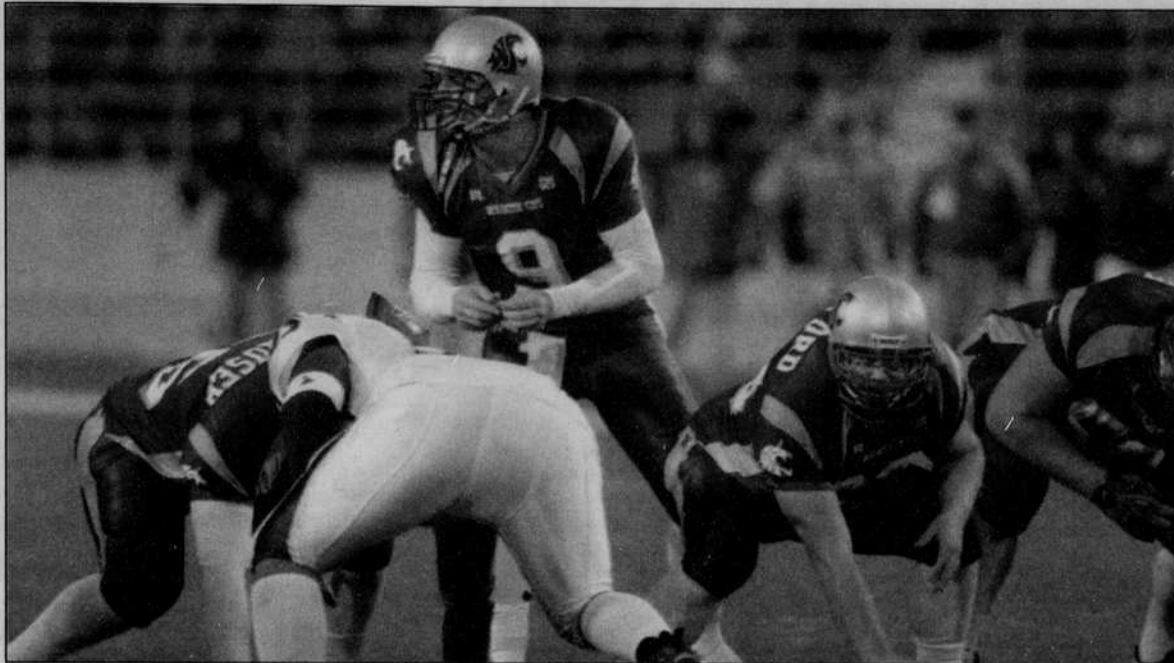


■ Washington State notes



COURTESY | WASHINGTON STATE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

Washington State sophomore quarterback Josh Swogger leads the Cougars and the nation's 12th-best passing attack.

Sophomore quarterback runs potent passing attack

The Cougars currently top the Pac-10 with a record of 39-9 that stretches over the past four seasons

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

A favorable trend has developed for Washington State in the past five seasons. Dating back to the year 2000, the Cougars are 5-1 in games following a bye week.

Washington State (3-1 overall, 1-0 Pacific-10 Conference) and second-year head coach Bill Doba needed some rest after an exhausting 20-19 victory in their league-opener at Arizona on Sept. 25. The game was decided in the last minute when quarterback Josh Swogger hit wide receiver Jason Hill with 53 seconds left on the clock. Despite a pair of failed two-point conversion attempts,

the Cougars held on.

Doba took over the show in the middle of Washington State's current conference-best record of 39-9 that spans over the last four seasons. USC has done equally well, and Oregon has the third best record from 2001-2004 at 27-15. Doba is 12-4 as head coach of the Pullman squad.

The Cougars' offense has stayed consistent this year, averaging 25.5 points and 373 yards per game. Swogger has nine touchdown passes and only two interceptions on the year. Both picks came in the season-opener against New Mexico. He threw six touchdowns in the past two games, and five of those were

caught by Hill.

Hill is 12th in the nation in receiving yards with 104.75 per game and leads a Washington State pass offense that averages 283 through the air. The sophomore has team-highs in touchdowns (6) and total yards (419). He has 15 receptions and averages 27.9 yards per catch.

Rushing may be the Cougars' only weakness. It averages 90 yards per game, and leading rusher Chris Bruhn has carried for 220 yards, but has no touchdowns. The senior running back averages 55 yards per game. Juniors Jerome Harrison and Allen Thompson have each scored two rushing touchdowns, accounting for Washington State's only scores on the ground. Harrison is also the leading kick-off returner with 93 yards gained.

WSU, page 12B

■ In my opinion

Bellotti deserves more credit for handling of Incognito situation

The Richie Incognito fiasco is finally over.

Thank goodness.

No more questions or comments. No more 'this guy is in our community? Oh no!'

I suffered sudden migraines every time I heard people jump on Mike Bellotti about his decision to bring in the troubled youth.

I'll admit, I had my doubts about it as well, but for some of those in the media, it was like blood in shark-infested waters.

Accusations about Oregon becoming a second-chance university or Bellotti caring more about winning than the community are swirling the air.

I'm not brown-nosing the guy, but credit needs to be given where credit is due.

He didn't have this guy come in with an impulse. OK, he had to give him a term scholarship because of timing and classes starting so soon, but he had rules set about what Incognito's conduct needed to be.

It's easy for us in the media to question what a person does and why, but we also need to recognize



CLAYTON JONES
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

when something is done right.

Incognito didn't comply with all of Bellotti's standards.

Don't let the door hit ya where the good lord split ya, Richie.

It's as easy as that.

He couldn't have handled the whole situation any better.

But I digress.

This Saturday's game against Washington State is huge for the Ducks.

If they lose, a 1-4 hole is hard to get out of with a much-improved Stanford and No. 7 California still to face on the road.

In fact, the Ducks need to bust out of their offensive slump and show some life.

Granted, this isn't a team blessed with an explosive offense, but one would have to think its talent is way

too high to be ranked seventh in the conference in scoring offense.

Kellen Clemens is in dire need of a breakout game where he can regain the confidence of his downfield passing, but it motivates me when he says he needs to just sling it.

And as every Oregon critic has said, the key to getting the ball to guys such as Tim Day or Dante Rosario is opening it up. They've tried, but it just isn't happening.

One positive aspect has been brought to the forefront of the offense; Terrence Whitehead is ready to be a feature back.

The way he slams into holes and always seems to break tackles and turn what looks like a negative play to a positive one is keeping this offense moving.

Oregon has the right idea of getting the ball in No. 24's hands as much as possible.

The man is seventh in the conference in rushing. To take a page out of Keyshawn Johnson's playbook — give him the damn ball!

But maybe the biggest problem for the flailing Ducks is their red zone and special teams play.

JONES, page 12B

IN BRIEF

Virginia's Marques Hagans played quarterback, wide receiver, running back and punt returner last year. Four games into the 2004 season, Hagans finally has settled in at one position.

The junior ranks fourth nationally in passing efficiency and leads the Atlantic Coast Conference's top-scoring offense.

Not bad for a guy who had thrown just 51 passes before this season.

"Given the tasks put before him in

the first four games, (he's done) about as well as a rookie quarterback could do," Virginia coach Al Groh said. "I know he's been in there a little bit before, but this is the first time he's ever really been the guy."

Hagans has thrown for 770 yards and four touchdowns against only one interception for the No. 10 Cavaliers (4-0 overall, 1-0 ACC).

In a 31-10 win against Syracuse on Sept. 25, Hagans ran for two touchdowns — including a 59-yarder on a broken play — and went 11-for-12 for 202 yards and a score.

— The Associated Press

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