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Lone Star prep stud returns home to face Longhorns

The nation's top freshman running back didn't feel Texas had a chance at a national championship win

BY JEFF LATZKE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Adrian Peterson left Texas as one of the most highly touted high-school tailbacks to ever play in the state. Since arriving in Oklahoma, he's lived up to the hype.

Peterson, averaging 136.5 yards rushing per game, returns to his home state Saturday when No. 2 Oklahoma (4-0, 1-0 Big 12) comes to Dallas for the Red River Shootout against the fifth-ranked Longhorns (4-0, 1-0).

The 19-year-old freshman will be playing deep in the heart of Texas for the first time since picking the Sooners and landing a verbal jab about the Longhorns' inability to win a national championship on his way out of town.

When Peterson announced where he would attend college, he was asked why he chose to go out of state. He said one of his goals was to win a national championship and the Texas schools didn't fall into that category.

But the nation's top freshman rusher isn't throwing out any more barbs.

Asked if he was excited about playing the Longhorns, Peterson's answer was simple: "Yeah, I'm

looking forward to it."

And what about the rivalry and the big crowd? "It is all about the game, and that's no different."

The laid-back attitude is nothing new for Peterson. Since he arrived in Norman, he's been on the quiet side. With no bravado, he has started his career with four straight 100-yard games — something no Oklahoma freshman has ever done.

And he's not worried about meeting the high expectations that followed him to college after he finished his high-school career with 54 touchdowns and more than 5,000 rushing yards in his final two seasons.

"I really don't feel like I have to prove anything to anybody," Peterson said. "I just go out there and run the ball. I'm not trying to embarrass anybody. As long as we win and are successful, that's all that matters."

Texas coach Mack Brown had high expectations when he recruited Peterson, but the kid from Palestine High School in east Texas instead crossed the border.

"Adrian has come on the scene and been one of the great players this year in college football," Brown said. "It's been amazing how fast

he's jumped in there and is doing so well. Every time he touches the ball, he has a chance to score."

Since Peterson arrived, Oklahoma's coaches have tried to shield him from constant attention. He was deemed off-limits to reporters before the season started as Stoops placed him behind junior Kejuan Jones on the depth chart.

But Peterson made his first appearance in the starting lineup last week — stepping in for the injured Jones — and had 146 yards rushing and a touchdown.

The Longhorns know what they're up against.

"He's an East Texas guy. Corn fed. I mean he's the type of guy raised in a barn. The type of guy who picks up haystacks. He looks like he does that," star Texas linebacker Derrick Johnson said. "He's the type of running back that defenses have to try to stop. He can run over people and he will outrun you, too. You've got to wrap him up."

Stoops said the 210-pound Peterson has been everything the Sooners hoped for and more. He routinely mentions how Peterson has shown a work ethic that has endeared him to teammates.

He's also thrilled with Peterson's maturity for a teenager something he expects will be crucial for his success against Texas on Saturday.

WSU: Cougars not shut out in Pac-10 play since 1975

Continued from page 11B

Swogger passed for 240 yards against New Mexico in his debut as a starter. The sophomore completed 24 of 38 pass attempts, and connected three balls for touchdowns.

Sophomore place kicker Loren Langley has also contributed to a proficient offense. Langley has made all 12 extra points this season. However, he has gone only 2-5 in field-goal attempts. The farthest kick was from 44 yards.

Keep on stoppin'

Washington State has not allowed more than 20 points to an opponent this season. The defense has not been distracted on the road, which has helped the Cougars get their three wins away from home.

Washington State's pass defense is second in the Pac-10, allowing only 158.75 yards a game. Oregon accumulates an average of 225.75 yards per game through the air.

Junior defensive back Alex Teems already has two interceptions this year. Safety Hamza Abdullah is fourth on the team in tackles and has also recorded a sack this season.

Defensive tackle Ropati Pitoitua has recorded 2.5 sacks for a loss of 20 yards and three tackles for a combined loss of 22 yards. The freshman has started two games and played in three. Washington State has a total of 10 quarterback sacks tallied this season.

No punts about it

Washington State punter Kyle Basler earned his second Pac-10

Player of the Week award for special teams after breaking two school records against Arizona. He was elected as the special teams captain and is also a candidate for the Ray Guy Award.

The junior blasted an 87-yard kick that traveled 77 yards through the air alone. Prior to Basler's punt, Gavin Hendrick held the previous record with an 83-yarder that came against California in 1975. Basler's kick is the second-longest in Pac-10 history, behind former California punter Scott Tabor's 89-yard shot that set the record in 1989.

Basler slipped past Jason Hanson's 1990 school record of 52 yards per punt by booting seven kicks for an average of 53.4 yards. This season, Basler's average is 46.1 yards — sixth in the nation — and he has placed seven kicks inside the 20-yard line.

Remember to score

Washington State has not been shut out in 221 consecutive Pac-10 games, the best streak of any team in the conference. The Cougars have scored in 180 consecutive home games at Martin Stadium, dating back to 1956.

This season, the Cougars have outscored opponents 38-10 in the first half and allowed only three points in the first quarter. A similar story was told in 2003. Washington State allowed only 25 points in the first quarter all last year.

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Jones: Better field position a must for Ducks

Continued from page 11B

It has been apparent all year that Oregon has struggled to stick the ball in the end zone. Oregon ranks seventh in the conference in red zone offense scoring 11 out of 17 attempts inside the 20-yard line. That comes to a 64.7 percentage, which is not what Oregon football is used to.

Bellotti says anything less than 80 percent is unacceptable.

And it hasn't only been the red zone offense.

The defense ranks ninth in the Pac-10 in allowing opponents to score with 83.3 percent once they reach the red zone.

I don't think that is the 80 percent Bellotti wants.

They are also at or near the bottom of the turnover margin, sacks allowed, third-down conversions, kick-off coverage and penalties.

All of these used to be categories Oregon excelled at, but now it's a struggle.

The Ducks also need to figure out how to get better field position because it seems they are starting a lot of drives deep in their own territory.

The Oregon fans are growing impatient with this team because the Ducks aren't winning and haven't shown signs of the Oregon that would drive the length of the field in five plays in less than two minutes.

But fans look at the positive.

No more Incognito questions!

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