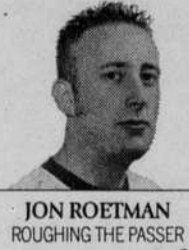


■ In my opinion



JON ROETMAN
ROUGHING THE PASSER

Oregon's D eliminates early season red zone ills

The Oregon defense had been there before. Arizona had possession at the Ducks' 3-yard line on Saturday, poised to punch the ball into the end zone. Despite facing a fourth-and-two, six points seemed inevitable for the Wildcats, who had little trouble traveling the previous 73 yards of the drive.

In weeks past, Oregon would have folded. Duck opponents had made a habit of scoring touchdowns after penetrating the red zone.

Saturday, however, was different. Arizona quarterback Kris Heavner rolled to his right and fired a pass intended for tight end Clarence McRae.

Earlier in the season, Heavner's pass would have found a way into McRae's mitts no matter how many Oregon defenders were in the way.

But Saturday was a new day, and this wasn't the same old Duck defense.

Middle linebacker Jerry Matson stepped in front of Heavner's pass, knocking it to the Autzen Stadium FieldTurf and preserving a 7-0 Oregon lead.

Matson's play set the tone early for an Oregon defense that did not allow a point until several of the starters were pulled late in the fourth quarter. Oregon's 28-14 win has the Ducks at .500 (3-3) for the first time this season and 2-1 in Pacific-10 Conference play.

"It's good to be on the other side of the coin," Matson said. "We've had our fair share of bad bounces, and hopefully we can get back on the lucky side."

Oregon's red-zone defense was tested a second time late in the first half, when Arizona had the ball first-and-goal on the Ducks' 5-yard line. Heavner again rolled to his right and again had his pass tipped by an Oregon defender. This time it was outside linebacker Anthony Trucks who tipped the pass into the air. A hustling Aaron Gipson sprinted over from his cornerback position to snag the loose ball out of the air with his left hand, halting the Wildcat drive at the 1-yard line.

A joking Gipson alluded to his days as a prep receiver after the game when asked how he was able to snag the interception.

"I was just showing off the one-hand grab," Gipson said. "Running to the ball was key. If I wasn't running to the ball and I was just slacking, I wouldn't have gotten the interception."

Another Oregon corner who played a major role in shutting down the Arizona passing attack was true freshman Jackie Bates, who made his first collegiate start on Saturday. The De La Salle High School product intercepted a pass and exuded confidence from the game's opening kickoff.

"It was good experience," Bates said. "I just wanted to go out there and compete and show everyone what I could do."

Bates' interception came in the fourth quarter on a deep pass from Arizona backup quarterback Richard Kovalcheck near the Oregon sideline.

"We wanted to bait the quarterback," Bates said. "I acted like I was guarding the inside receiver, and then I dropped back and the next thing I knew, the ball was in the air and I just

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■ Duck football



Oregon's Demetrius Williams catches a 55-yard pass from Kellen Clemens in the Ducks' 28-14 victory over Arizona. Williams led the Ducks with nine receptions for 153 yards.

ERIK R. BISHOFF
PHOTOGRAPHER

Ducks declaw 'Cats, improve to 3-3

With early offensive momentum and a strong defensive effort, Oregon defeats Arizona 28-14, despite 114 yards in penalties

BY CLAYTON JONES
SPORTS EDITOR

Oregon's fortunes may have been foreshadowed during the initial drive of its 28-14 victory over Arizona on Saturday at Autzen Stadium.

The Ducks drove the ball down the field methodically and had it on the Arizona two-yard line when it appeared that Oregon quarterback Kellen Clemens fumbled the ball while trying to scramble toward the end zone.

Fortunately for Oregon, the officials said Clemens was down and Arizona head coach Mike Stoops was on the field showing his displeasure for the call, resulting in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

"It was a fumble, and they missed it," Stoops said. "When things aren't going right, it seems like you don't get those calls."

After the play, Clemens said he spoke with the official.

"I shared my opinion with the ref that my

knee was down," Clemens said.

But when asked if his knee was down, Clemens smiled and said, "Uh, I don't know."

Running back Terrence Whitehead leaped into the end zone for the first of his three touchdowns on the next play and gave the Ducks a 7-0 lead.

That's the type of game it would be for the Wildcats.

Oregon would eventually build a 28-0 lead with the help of its stingy defense, which held the worst offense in the Pacific-10 Conference to a mere 266 yards. Most of those yards came in the final quarter when Oregon had second and third-string players in the game on defense.

"The defense played a bend-but-don't-break defense in the first half," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said, "then was dominant in the second half except for those last two drives."

Oregon cornerback Aaron Gipson, who picked off two passes in the game, said he wanted to stay in to preserve the shutout.



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Members of Arizona's coaching staff attempt to restrain head coach Mike Stoops from a referee after a controversial fumble was ruled in favor of Oregon.

"With five minutes to go, coach came up to us and said he wanted to put the backups in and see how they played in a pressure situation," Gipson said. "I wanted to be on the field for the shutout. I started it off, and I wanted to end it."

Another massive force for the Ducks on defense was the 6-foot-5, 345-pound Haloti Ngata. He was blowing through Arizona linemen and creating havoc while tallying eight total tackles, three tackles for losses, two quarterback hurries and half a sack.

"I felt more active than I have all season," Ngata said. "With our defensive line being so good, I was able to be single-blocked and make some plays."

While the Oregon defense was stuffing Arizona, the offense kept its momentum from last Saturday's win against Washington State and totaled 492 yards.

"Our offense as a group carried over the confidence built in the fourth quarter of the Washington State game," Bellotti said.

Clemens appeared confident in the pocket for the second consecutive week and completed 21 of 30 passes for 336 yards and one touchdown. Clemens has now thrown a touchdown pass in 11 straight games.

"I thought Kellen was very sharp today," Bellotti said. "His comfort zone in the pocket and his touch on the ball was excellent. He gave the guys a chance to catch the football."

Clemens' favorite target Saturday was Demetrius Williams, who pulled in nine passes for 153 yards.

"He's getting one-on-one situations," Clemens said. "Demetrius will kill a guy one-on-one. I'm just throwing it out there, and he gets them."

As sharp as the offense was, it did sputter a couple of times, turning the ball over twice on broken fourth-down plays.

The first was a fumbled snap between Clemens and center Enoka Lucas.

On the other fourth-down miscue, Clemens was stepped on by his own offensive lineman and stumbled back and fell for a 7-yard loss.

"We shot ourselves in the foot," Bellotti said. "Those things are hard to handle as a coach when you take the risk of going for it on fourth down and not even getting the play off."

Clemens said he is to blame for the second miscue.

"I should have kept my feet if I was any sort of an athlete," Clemens said.

Oregon's penalty woes didn't disappear after a week of practice concentrated on

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