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ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

Haloti Ngata (on the tackle) A.J. Tuitele (34), and Ramone Reed, seen here against Arizona, have contributed to giving Oregon the third-best run defense in the Pac-10. The Ducks have allowed 109.3 yards per game on the ground.

Thriving Oregon battles faltering Washington

Holding a 3-1 conference mark, the Ducks look for fourth consecutive win

BY CLAYTON JONES
SPORTS EDITOR

A less-than-stellar Washington team limps into Autzen Stadium Saturday to face an Oregon squad that has won three consecutive Pacific-10 Conference games.

The Huskies (1-6 overall, 0-4 Pac-10) have lost two in a row and were beat up by No. 1 Southern California last weekend.

The Ducks (4-3, 3-1) are coming off of a victory at Stanford and are riding high on a streak that has seen them put up over 1,500 yards of offense in their last three games.

None of that matters Saturday.

"All I can say is it's going to be an intense game," Oregon offensive tackle Adam Snyder said. "Both sides of the ball are going to be playing with emotion."

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti agrees with Snyder and says it doesn't matter what shape a team is in going into this game.

"This game, much like the Civil War, isn't about records," Bellotti said. "It's about personal pride, and you better come ready to play a good football game."

Oregon has taken the brunt of the last two games between the duo, losing 42-10 at Husky Stadium last season and 42-14 at Autzen Stadium two years ago, resulting in Washington players celebrating in the middle of the "O" at the 50-yard line.

Bellotti said that what the Huskies did two years ago doesn't bother him.

"The fact that we allow a team to (beat us at home) is what I'm most concerned with," Bellotti said. "If we put ourselves in that situation, a team can do whatever they want to do after the game or before the game."

A difference this year, compared to the past two matchups with the Huskies, will be the Oregon defense. The Ducks' defense has been allowing less than 300 yards of total offense per game, and last week against Stanford it tallied 10 sacks and held the Cardinal to minus-8 yards rushing.

"Their front is really doing a lot,"



COURTESY | WASHINGTON ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

Washington wide receiver Charles Frederick, seen here against Fresno State, has been sidelined with a pulled hamstring. Head coach Keith Gilbertson said there is a chance the senior will play Saturday against the Ducks. The Huskies have missed Frederick, who is arguably their best offensive player.

Washington head coach Keith Gilbertson said. "If you watch the Stanford game, they're just all over their quarterbacks. The pressure is on the quarterbacks every snap."

The Oregon defensive line accounted for seven sacks, and super-sized tackle Haloti Ngata is looking more unblockable as each game goes by.

"Haloti Ngata is playing at a different level," Bellotti said.

Gilbertson has been impressed with Ngata's play, but isn't sure if his listed weight is accurate.

"He is a big, powerful, athletic guy," Gilbertson said. "They list him at (only) 345? Like I said, he is a big, powerful man."

While the Oregon defense has been impressive, the Washington offense has struggled.

The Huskies rank ninth in the Pac-10 in scoring offense (14.0 points per game), passing offense (169.4 yards per game) and total offense (315.4 yards per game).

The main problem for the Huskies is their questionable play at quarterback. Between junior Casey Paus, Sophomore Isaiah Stanback and freshman Carl Bonnell, the Huskies have the worst quarterback efficiency rating in the Pac-10 (78.0, almost 30 points below Arizona).

All three quarterbacks have started for Washington. Stanback started last week against USC, and he is listed at the top of the depth chart.

According to Bellotti, the Huskies question marks at quarterback make it tough to come up with a defensive scheme.

"The problem for us will be not knowing who will be at quarterback," Bellotti said. "Paus is a pocket passer. Stanback is extremely mobile and extremely fast ... Bonnell is in the middle of the road and is very agile and very fast."

Another question for the Huskies is the health of their most explosive player, wide receiver and kick returner Charles Frederick, who has been dealing with a hamstring injury most of the season.

"There is a chance (he will play)," Gilbertson said.

Bellotti would rather he stayed out one more game.

"He is a great run-after-the-catch guy, and that skill obviously helps him as a returner," Bellotti said. "It wouldn't break my heart if he wasn't completely healthy."

Washington will lean on the running attack and the No. 7 rusher in the Pac-10, Kenny James. The sophomore is averaging 74.6 yards per game and has five touchdowns on the season.

It's very much the opposite for the Oregon offense, as they are ranked second in the conference and 15th nationally in total offense (449.1 yards per game).

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