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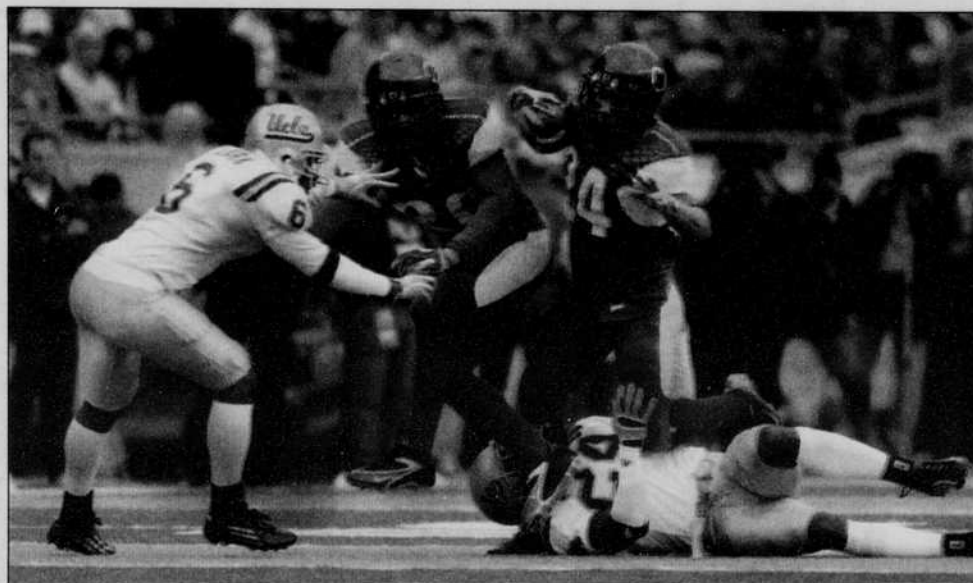
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DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

With his 124 yards in 14 carries last week against UCLA, Oregon junior running back Terrence Whitehead (24) became the 10th player in school history to rush for over 1,000 yards in a single season.

Civil War in Corvallis holds the ticket to bowl game

Oregon and OSU battle for a winning record as both teams stand at 5-5

BY JON ROETMAN
SENIOR SPORTS REPORTER

CORVALLIS — The 108th installment of the Civil War is worth more than just state bragging rights.

Oregon takes on Oregon State Saturday at Reser Stadium at 4 p.m., with both teams needing a win to qualify for a bowl. The Ducks and Beavers both sport 5-5 overall records and -4-3 Pacific-10 Conference records. With both teams facing a win-or-go-home scenario, the 2004 showdown is one of the most significant since the rivalry began in 1894.

"I can say this honestly," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said, "this is the biggest game we've ever played."

Oregon State enters Saturday as a team on the rise. After starting the season with a dismal 1-4 record, the Beavers have won four of their last five contests and are in a position to end Oregon's streak of 10 consecutive winning seasons and seven straight bowl appearances.

After winning four games in a row, the Ducks lost their last two, including a heartbreaking one-point loss in Berkeley, Calif., against the fourth-ranked Golden Bears.

With momentum on their side and the fact that the home team has won the last seven Civil War meetings, the Beavers have to be considered the favorite. Don't they?

"Not for this game; not for the Civil War," Oregon State defensive end Bill Swancutt said. "Even if one team was undefeated and one team had lost all its games, it would still mean the same to both teams."

While there is plenty at stake Saturday, neither team expected these circumstances.

Oregon State appeared primed for a strong season after the only things that kept the Beavers from upsetting then-No. 3 Louisiana State during their opener were three missed extra points by redshirt freshman kicker Alexis Serna.

However, Oregon State couldn't recover from the loss and ended up dropping all five of its games against ranked opponents this year.

Oregon entered the season ranked No. 24 nationally with an abundance of talent on both sides of the football. But a season-opening home loss to lowly Indiana and nagging, year-long injuries to key players sent the Ducks' conference championship hopes into a tailspin.

"Some of the injuries have had an effect on our performance," Oregon quarterback Kellen Clemens said. "But with the injuries or without them, we have underachieved this year. A 5-5 record isn't anything we



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Oregon State senior and first-year starting running back Dwight Wright has run for 700 yards and five touchdowns in 184 attempts in 2004. He had a career-high 108 yards against New Mexico earlier this season.

thought we would have going into the final week of the regular season."

With dreams of a BCS bowl bid long gone for both teams, the Ducks and the Beavers are focusing on the here and now. One of Oregon's biggest concerns Saturday will be stopping the run, as the Ducks have allowed more than 200 yards on the ground during each of the last two weeks.

The Beavers featured tailback is 5-foot-9, 208-pound Dwight Wright. The senior is a shifty runner who has amassed 700 yards and five touchdowns in 184 carries and has the agility to give Oregon fits.

While Oregon has struggled against the run of late, Wright isn't sold on the thought of a guaranteed big day.

"When I was watching the film, it's just small assignment areas in which they're missing," Wright said of Oregon. "Overall, they look like a real solid defense, especially their D linemen."

"It's not like, 'I'm so excited, I'm going to run all over them,' because they're obviously a good team, and they're not going to keep making those little mistakes week after week."

Then again, the Beavers may not need to run the ball to be successful on offense. Senior quarterback Derek Anderson leads the Pac-10 in passing, averaging nearly 291 yards per game. The strong-armed, 6-foot-6 Scappoose native had one of the best games of his collegiate career against the Ducks in 2002, throwing for 370 yards and four touchdowns with no interceptions. He has also moved into fourth place all-time in conference passing yards with 10,540 and is 169 yards away from passing former UCLA quarterback Cade McNown for third.

Anderson has found most of his success this season throwing in the direction of wide receiver Mike Hass. The Portland native is the nation's fourth-leading pass-catcher, averaging 112 yards per game, including a 12-catch, 293-yard performance

against Boise State.

"I've gotten more chances this year to make plays," Hass said. "Derek and I, it's our second year (playing together), and we've improved our rapport on the field."

Oregon's best defense against Oregon State's vaunted passing attack might well be to keep it off the field with a solid offensive performance of its own. The Ducks will look to control the clock and pound the ball between the tackles with running back Terrence Whitehead. The junior tallied 124 yards in only 14 carries against UCLA last week but was seldom used in the second half after Oregon fell behind and needed to throw the ball.

Whitehead, who has rushed for the second-most yards in the Pac-10 this season (1,034), will go against the conference's third-best run defense. The Beavers allow only 124 yards per game on the ground.

The success of the Ducks' passing game will depend largely on the health of wide receiver Demetrius Williams (turf toe) and tight end Tim Day (foot), who have both battled injuries for most of the season. Both players practiced this week and will attempt to play Saturday.

With a lack of weapons at his disposal, Clemens struggled against UCLA last week, throwing a pair of interceptions. Still, the Burns native is third in the Pac-10 in total offense and has thrown for 2,422 yards and 19 touchdowns.

With all that's gone wrong for Oregon this season, the Ducks still have plenty to play for Saturday.

"We're in a situation where if we don't win, we're out of this thing," defensive back Justin Phinisee said. "If we win, we get to a bowl game. Everybody wants to get paid, everybody wants to go to this bowl game and everybody wants to keep having fun."

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