

Solid offensive game should put Ducks past Oregon State

Injuries have slowed down what was once a potent Oregon offense

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

As much as Oregon needs the running game, a solid passing game is essential to a prolific offense as well.

Last week against UCLA was a good example.

"I don't think we threw the ball very well," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "We did not execute the passing game. I think that Kellen was not sharp. I think we had opportunities, we had wide receivers, running backs and tight ends.

"We just couldn't see them due to protection or just didn't execute the throw."

Once ranked in the top-15 in passing offense in the nation, the Ducks have fallen out of the top-25 nationally and to fifth in the conference in passing offense, averaging 249.5 yards per game. Going into its 249th against Arizona a month ago, Oregon was ranked second in the conference with 279.3 yards per game, behind only Oregon State.

The loss of leading receivers Tim Day and Demetrius Williams, who are third and first on the team in receptions respectively, put pressure on running back Terrence Whitehead and a group of young receivers to gel with quarterback Kellen Clemens mid-season.

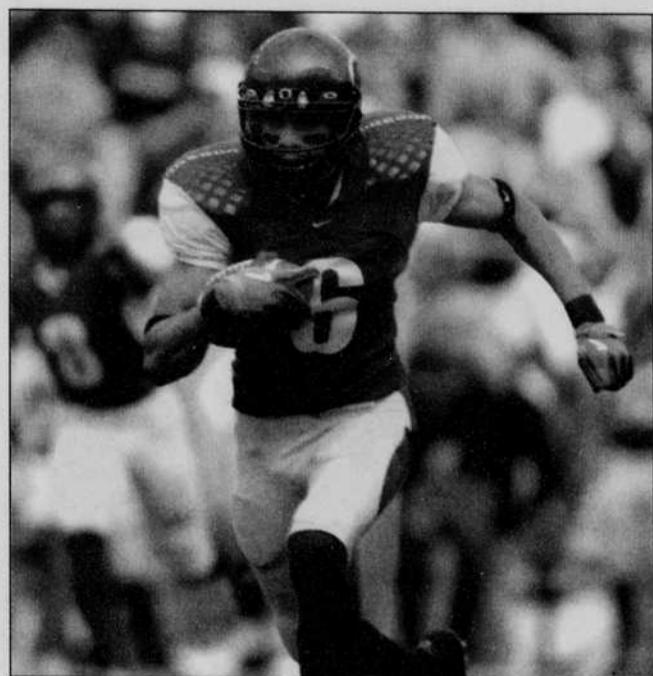
Williams is the team's leading receiver with 43 catches for 539 yards and one touchdown, despite missing significant playing time with a turf toe injury.

He caught 12 balls against Washington State, which represents the second-most grabs in a single game in school history. Williams also has the second-most career 100-yard receiving games in school history.

Home is where the victories are in Civil War

It's no secret that home-field advantage has played a significant role in the history of the Civil War, especially recently. The last seven games have been won by the home team. The last road victory was captured by the Ducks in 1996.

"I think that obviously there is



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Oregon junior wide receiver Demetrius Williams leads the Ducks in receptions with 43 and yards with 539, despite missing a portion of the season with a turf toe injury.

a home-field advantage, and it probably has to do with the surface of the field," Bellotti said. "I think Oregon State's is the only one of its kind now, probably in the western United States.

That part is different. I think that the fan base and the intensity with which the game is played adds to the home-field advantage."

Ironically, the Ducks own a much better road record in the all-time series against the Beavers than in Eugene. Oregon is 25-16-5 in Corvallis compared with its 25-23-4 mark in Eugene.

"Sure, there's something to home-field advantage, we'd all rather play at home," Oregon State's Mike Riley said. "But once the game starts, it doesn't really mean anything to us."

November usually a good month for Oregon

For only the second time during Mike Bellotti's tenure, the Ducks have lost more than one game in the month of November.

Oregon is 0-2 this month with its recent losses to California and UCLA. The only other season with more than one loss was the 2002 season, when the Ducks went 1-3 with losses to Washington, Washington State and Oregon State.

The Beavers own the most wins against Bellotti in November. Oregon State is 3-6 in November, while Washington has two wins, and Arizona State, Washington State, California and UCLA each have one victory. Bellotti has accumulated a 21-9 record in November, going 13-1 at Autzen Stadium and 8-8 on the road.

Undiscovered territory for Ducks and Beavers

Never once in the 107-game history of the Civil War have Oregon and Oregon State played in a scenario where the winner concludes the regular season with a winning season and a bowl game while the loser goes home.

The closest scenario in recent memory occurred in 1957, with Oregon entering the regular-season finale at 7-3 (6-1 in conference play) and Oregon State 7-2 (5-2).

The Beavers won 10-7 to finish tied with the Ducks, yet Oregon still advanced to the Rose Bowl, because Oregon State played in the 1957 Rose Bowl and the conference's "non-repeat" clause was in effect. Under current guidelines, the winner of the game (Oregon State) would have earned the Rose Bowl berth.

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