

Oregon: Former Ducks make waves in the NFL

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Home away from home

Four of Oregon's five road games this year — at Houston, Stanford, Arizona and Washington State — are against teams that finished below .500 last season.

An Oct. 8 trip to Arizona State is the only time Oregon will face an opponent on the road that finished last season with a winning record.

While the road may be kind, Oregon is a modest 13-7 in the last three seasons at the usually-friendly confines of Autzen Stadium.

The Ducks again have a difficult home schedule as three teams ranked in the Associated Press preseason Top 25 will visit Eugene, including No. 1 USC.

The Ducks' schedule contains four preseason Top 25 teams overall, including Fresno State (24), California (19), Arizona State (20) and USC.

Oregon is 1-5 in the last two seasons against ranked opponents.

Ducks in the pros

While Oregon players busily prepare for the 2005 season, some former Ducks are hoping to make noise in the NFL.

Many have speculated that Detroit quarterback Joey Harrington, the Lions' first pick in the 2002 draft, is wearing out his welcome in the Motor City. Though Harrington has improved his completion percentage, touchdown total and win total each season, he remains under the microscope as the Lions have used three first-round picks on wide receivers to aid Harrington.

If Harrington does not have the type of season the Lions expect, third-year head coach Steve Mariucci may be

inserting Harrington's backup, former pro bowler Jeff Garcia, who played for Mariucci in San Francisco.

Harrington's college back-up, A.J. Feeley, is attempting to make a name for himself with the Miami Dolphins. Feeley started eight of Miami's 16 games last season and led the Dolphins in completions, yards and touchdowns. He is expected to battle veteran Gus Frerotte for the starting position this season.

Former Duck standout Samie Parker has battled back from injury and positioned himself atop the Kansas City Chiefs' depth chart at wide receiver. This season Parker will be in search of an expanded role in an explosive Kansas City offense.

Another ex-Oregon receiver, Keenan Howry, is eyeing a breakout season with the Minnesota Vikings. With the departure of superstar Randy Moss, Howry is listed second, behind Nate Burleson, at wide receiver.

Former teammates Adam Snyder, Marcus Maxwell, and Keith Lewis, have reunited in San Francisco. Snyder is the expected starter at right guard for the 49ers, while Lewis is second at strong safety behind veteran Tony Parrish. Maxwell is not currently listed on the 49ers depth chart at wide receiver. In all, San Francisco's roster boasts 20 players from Pac-10 schools.

Igor Olshansky, an Oregon defensive lineman until the 2003 season, may arguably be making the biggest impact for his team. Olshansky, who recorded 54 tackles and one sack last season, will start at defensive end for the defending AFC West Champion San Diego Chargers in 2005.

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Houston: Cougars' offense similar to Utah's

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play," Briles said. "We're not going to have wonder. We're not going to hope. We're not going to have any type of falsified faith. We're just going to line up and play ball and expect to win the game on September first."

First quarter woes

Houston was outscored 108-42 last season in the first quarter. Blame can be placed on both the offense and defense for the numbers; the offense ranked 93rd in the nation in scoring in 2004 and the defense allowed 32.2 points per game. The Cougars have devoted their offseason time to working out in the summer heat with hopes of turning their program around. As stated earlier in the week, Briles was pleased with how well his team prepared itself for Oregon.

"We are locking in on what Oregon is probably going to do," Briles said. "The first game is a feeling-out process for both teams. Hopefully, we will make the right decisions and the right guesses and at the right time."

A new look on defense

Houston is switching to a 3-4 alignment, which Briles thinks will emphasize the team's speed and athleticism. Junior Marquay Love anchors the middle of the defensive line at nose tackle and is flanked by senior Kade Lane and senior Gerard Richard as defensive ends. Four linebackers patrol the passing lanes for Houston, with junior Wade Koehl and sophomore Brendan Pahulu playing contain assignments on the outside.

Remember Utah?

In the 2003 season, then-No. 22 Ducks were upset by 2005 top draft pick Alex Smith and Utah on a chilly Friday night in Salt Lake City 17-13. The programs have since gone in separate directions.

The upperclassmen playing for Oregon on defense this year remember the

game well and the spread offense they faced, which is much like Houston's.

Houston likes to air it out to its four, and sometimes five, wide receivers. It will keep Oregon on its toes by giving the ball to its single back, Evans, who should have room to run if the passing game takes off.

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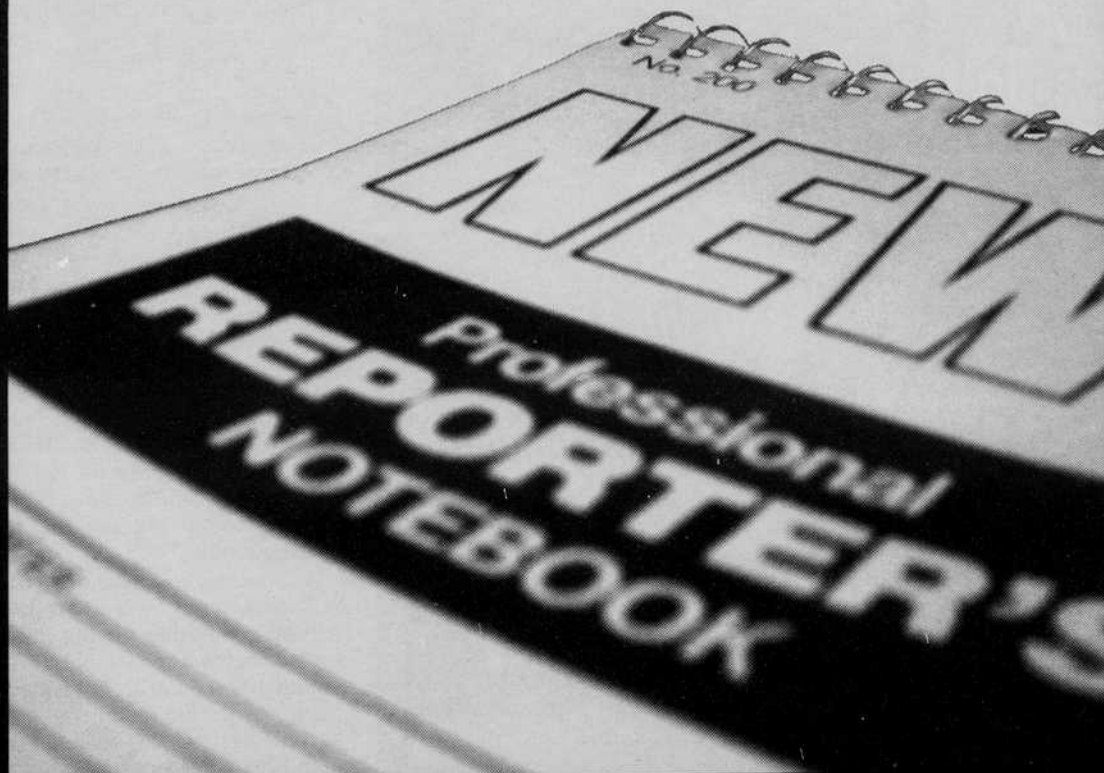
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