

"I told them they've got to know what it feels like to do this — to accomplish something — because I'm going to hold them to it."

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti, on what he told his players at halftime prior to defeating No. 6 Washington 31-28 in Seattle on Nov. 8, 1997.

Ducks scorch Sun Devils, improve to 5-1

■ Game recap

Ducks dig deep into playbook

BY SHAWN MILLER
SPORTS EDITOR

Oregon offensive coordinator Gary Crowton might have said, "Let's open the bag of tricks and introduce the Arizona State fans to a little thing we call 'trickeration'."

Or maybe he just felt tired of not seeing any deceptive, fling-it-down-the-field plays.

Whatever the reason, Oregon (5-1 overall, 2-1 conference) brought out the fun bag en route to a 31-17 victory over then-No. 17 Arizona State (3-3, 1-2) Saturday night in Tempe, Ariz.

"(Crowton's) mind is yet to open up," Oregon quarterback Kellen Clemens said. "We are just out there having fun."

Wide receiver Demetrius Williams ran for 22 yards on the Ducks' opening play, weaving through defenders before smacking into a fellow Duck near midfield.

"It's real fun when you have an offensive coordinator who is open to anything," Williams said. "You'll come to the sideline and say, 'Coach, we can do this.' And he doesn't care. He goes with it."

Oregon brought out the flea-flicker for the first time in a while, and it worked. For 61 yards to Williams inside the Arizona State 10-yard line.

"(Clemens) made a great play and I just felt it was my duty to go make a play for him," Williams said.

Terrence Whitehead took a forward lateral from Clemens for a six-yard touchdown on the following play to tie the game at 10 midway through the second quarter.

"We were trying to show the defense some different stuff," Whitehead said. "Trying to be balanced and go with whatever works for us."

The Ducks even brought out the halfback pass, which failed to reach Clemens, who had slipped out down the left sideline.

"I told Terrence he's 0 for 2 now on passes, and I don't think he liked that," Clemens said.

With exception of the miscue on the throw,

FOOTBALL, page 10

■ Game notes

Defense steps up to slow down Arizona State

BY SHAWN MILLER
SPORTS EDITOR

When two ranked teams — each averaging more than 35 points per game — met in Tempe, Ariz., Saturday night, it wasn't run defense that people were focused on. But, as the 62,789 fans in attendance filed out of the stadium, it was all they could talk about.

The Ducks allowed only 53 net rushing yards to the Sun Devils. In fact, the stingy defense gave up only nine rushing yards in the third quarter and 14 in the fourth.

"A lot of it was some great, great, great coverage by our secondary and the rest was some nice stunts, good calls from our defensive coordinator," Oregon cornerback Justin Phinisee said.

Prior to the game, the Sun Devils ranked fourth in the Pacific-10 Conference in rushing offense, averaging 170.4 yards per game. Coming into the night, the Ducks ranked fourth in the conference in rush defense, surrendering 117 yards per game on the ground.

On the flip side, the Ducks rushed for 234 yards, the most this season. Running back Terrence Whitehead keyed the attack with 122 rushing yards and one touchdown.

"Rushing is an emphasis every week," said Whitehead, who also caught nine passes for 100 yards and one touchdown. "We might not get it done every week, but today we got it done."

Kicked out

Oregon's starting placekicker was sidelined with a quadriceps injury. No problem.

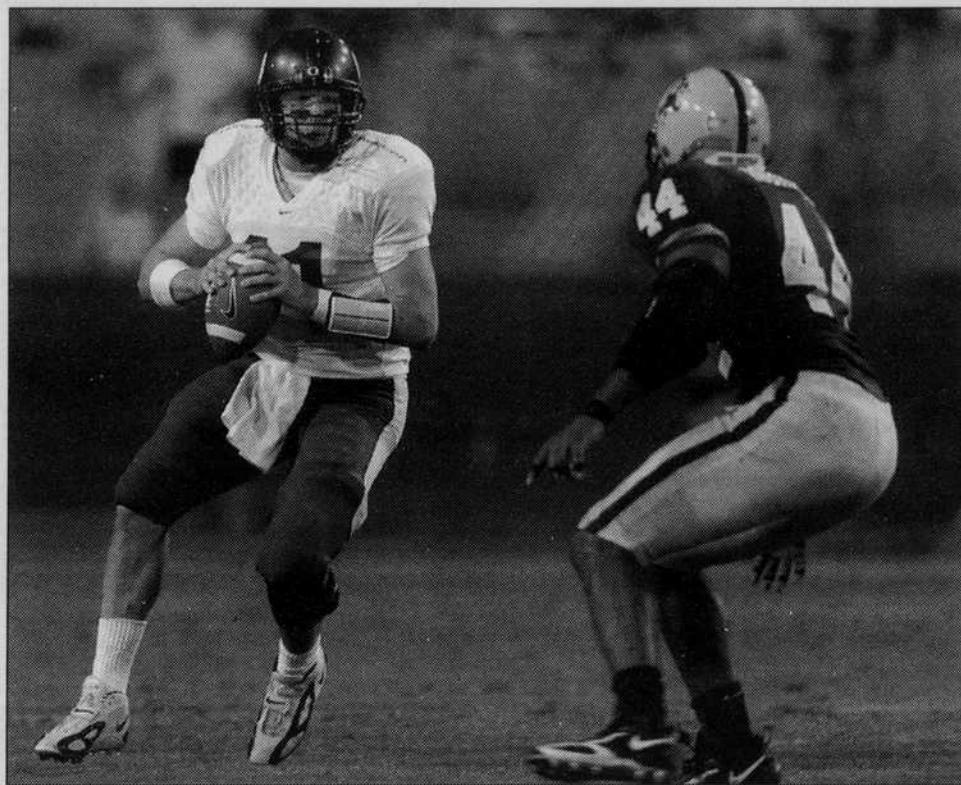
Matt Evensen, whose primary duty has been kickoffs this season, filled in by kicking three field goals of more than 40 yards.

"Everybody helped out ... it was always a good snap, a good hold," Evensen said.

Entering the season, the placekicking position was one of the most uncertain areas of the team. The questions were answered in the first two weeks as Martinez connected on 11 field goals, including a school-record six during a 47-14 victory over Montana in the home opener.

Martinez aggravated his quad during last week's win against Stanford and the game-time decision was that he was unable to play.

"About 10 minutes before the game,"



COURTESY

Oregon quarterback Kellen Clemens threw for 278 yards and two touchdowns to lead the Ducks to a 31-17 victory over Arizona State on Saturday.

Evensen said.

Evensen logged two long distance first-half field goals. He got the Ducks on the scoreboard with a 42-yard field goal at the 11:52 mark in the second quarter and booted a 51-yard kick to close the half, giving Oregon a 13-10 lead. He connected on another 42-yarder on Oregon's first possession of the second half.

The night didn't begin well for Evensen, whose first collegiate field goal attempt — from 55 yards — was blocked by Arizona State defensive tackle DeWayne Hollyfield to end Oregon's first possession of the game. Evensen missed a 47-yard field goal to the right in the third quarter.

Avoiding self-sabotage

Oregon escaped its fair share of destruc-

tive behavior.

Quarterback Kellen Clemens threw his second interception of the season to the Sun Devils' Jamar Williams on the Ducks' second drive. Williams returned the ball to the Oregon eight-yard line. Arizona State was forced to kick a 34-yard field goal to put the Sun Devils up 10-0 midway through first quarter.

On the Ducks' next series, running back Jonathan Stewart fumbled the ball in the red zone. Oregon had driven from its six-yard line in 10 plays and converted three third-downs before the turnover.

Arizona State safety Zach Catanese picked off Clemens in the third quarter at the Oregon 40-yard line. However, Oregon's Justin

NOTES, page 10

■ In my opinion

No excuse for excuses following poor performance

Flying 30,000 feet above the ground en route to Tempe, Ariz., I was expecting to attend a college football game that would be decided by one team's offense manipulating the other's defense.

Riding down the press elevator long after the game was over and my game recap had been written, I didn't expect to hear the excuses.

An Arizona State assistant athletic director for media relations let it out.

"I saw this one coming," he said.

Saw what coming? The team deflated after nearly upending top-ranked USC last week? Or overlooking an Oregon squad that had lost 35-0 in the second half to the same USC team one week earlier?

Nope. Injuries was the excuse.

He went on to list just about every player who had missed the game because of an injury, or who hadn't played 100 percent of the game because of what might have been an injury. I guarantee you that if the guy who runs out to get the tee following kickoffs had a hangnail, I would have heard about it.

As I was riding back to my hotel, the radio was tuned to "Devil Talk." I didn't catch much of the show — seeing as it was nearly 12:30 a.m. by the time I exited Sun Devil Stadium — but what I did hear was complaining fans.

So it got me thinking: Why do the fans have to find blame, and why does the program have to find an excuse after a loss? Can another team ever just outplay your team?

Evidently not. I will be the first to admit that I recently found myself wondering how certain offensive coordinators who called the same series of plays every time Oregon had the ball could have a job in Division I football.

I will go even further. As a fan, I put a lot of blame on Andy Ludwig last season when



SHAWN MILLER
FULL-COURT PRESS

the Oregon offense sputtered. But I am not alone.

I have had general admission season tickets at Autzen Stadium for the past 10 years. So I know what it is like to sit next to ignorant fans who find excuses to boo or blame their team whenever they feel more knowledgeable than the coaches. Too many

times, I've sat near some drunk moron who boos when Oregon sits on the ball deep in its own territory while the clock winds down toward halftime.

Listening to the postgame show on the radio, callers always phone in to talk about how they thought a certain play should or shouldn't have been called, or to say that a certain player didn't do his job running the play.

This is a world filled with blame and excuses.

There simply doesn't seem to be the possibility that someone earned the win by outplaying and outperforming the opposition.

That isn't more prevalent anywhere than in college football, where the number-one excuse for a loss is injury problem. Well, the thing is, a football player runs at full speed and smashes into another player running toward him at full speed. Injuries are going to happen and the programs that work through them are usually the teams standing atop the polls.

It is time for people to stop complaining if their team doesn't perform perfectly and time for the excuses to end. There comes a time when fans and players need to own up to the fact that they just got beat.

In Saturday night's case, one sportswriter made an astoundingly astute observation after hearing the Arizona State media relations member ramble on about the injuries.

"Sounds like football," he said.

smiller@dailyemerald.com