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# Ducks anticipate battle with long-time rival Huskies

An interception in 1994 and a post-game dance at Autzen Stadium heightened tension between the teams

BY LUKE ANDREWS  
SPORTS REPORTER

It was a call from long-time radio announcer Jerry Allen, and it's a sound that is music to many Duck fan's ears.

"Kenny Wheaton's gonna score! Kenny Wheaton's gonna score!"

Later termed "The Pick," it's the play that highlights Oregon's climb to a Pacific-10 Conference power and graces DuckVision before every Oregon home game.

It's the play that put Autzen Stadium on the map, and it came against one of Oregon's biggest rivals: The Washington Huskies.

It was the 1994 season and the Ducks had dropped 17 of their last 20 games to the Huskies, including five straight.

Ninth-ranked Washington trailed Oregon 24-20 late in the fourth quarter, but threatened with the ball at Oregon's 8-yard line when quarterback Damon Huard stepped back to throw.

Huard tossed the ball toward the left sideline, but Wheaton, a freshman cornerback, stepped in front of the intended receiver and returned it 97 yards for a touchdown to give Oregon the improbable 31-20 win.

The Ducks won their final four games that season and reached the Rose Bowl for the first time in 37 years.

"It kind of made it a rivalry. Up to that point, it was kind of one-sided," Allen said. "That play kind of ignited a fire in them, and all of a sudden, there was a little competition. That probably started the true rivalry."

It was simply one play, but it may have been the one that transcended the Oregon-Washington rivalry from simply little brother/big brother to one that is comparable to any in the nation.

The Ducks versus the Dawgs: It's remained one of the most anticipated football games for both teams since they first played each other in 1900.

Many contend that it is the most emotional rivalry for the two respective schools — even more so than the Civil War with Oregon State or, for Washington, the Apple Cup against Washington State.

"It's one of those teams you never want to lose to," Allen said. "That's the one game all year you've got to win."

The teams have battled 97 times, and in years past, the Ducks and Huskies have gotten downright ugly.

Possibly starting the feud was a Washington decision during the 1948 season. That year, Oregon and California finished in a tie for first place with conference foes determining which team would attend the Rose Bowl.

The Huskies chose California.

"Some Oregon fans have never forgotten that," Allen said. "So there was some animosity."

Decades later, the rivalry became increasingly heated.

Rick Neuheisel's 2002 Husky team added fuel to the rivalry when, following a 42-14 drubbing of the Ducks in Autzen, his players proceeded to dance on Oregon's midfield logo. This came after former Oregon safety Keith Lewis provided some pregame bulletin board material saying Washington quarterback Cody Pickett was overrated.

"We have players here that remember some of those incidents of the past that will certainly be fueled by that," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said.

Cornerback Justin Phinisee, a senior, remembers it all too well.

"When the Huskies come in here and chant and dance on our field, we kind of do take that personally," Phinisee said. "So our mindset is just that we're going to put more points on the board and our defense is going to dominate. That just ensures that we're going to do that."

The two traded victories throughout the 90s, culminating with the 2000 season when, along with Oregon State, the Ducks and Huskies shared the Pac-10 title.

Oregon defeated Washington and Marques Tuiasosopo that year in Eugene 23-16, but the Huskies hold the all-time advantage 58-34-5.

Records aside, the one thing to count on Saturday is Autzen Stadium transforming from simply a hostile environment to an all-out war zone.

"It's always a big game. All our

fans would like you to know that Oregon State and Washington are our biggest rivals. We know that," said Bellotti, who owns a 5-4 record against the Huskies. "It really doesn't matter records or whatever happened last year or 75 years ago, what matters is this week, this team, and the Washington Huskies."

According to the Duck players, this week's practice was just business as usual.

"It'll be a little bit different, but it's a football game," running back Jonathan Stewart said. "Every week is going to be a big game no matter who we play. You can't really go into the game thinking that it's anything bigger than it is."

Stewart is one of five players on the Oregon roster from the Evergreen State. The freshman running back was the state's Gatorade Player of the Year after rushing for more than 7,000 yards in four years at Lacey High School.

Defensive end and last year's sack leader, Devan Long (Anacortes), offensive guard Matt Webb (Vancouver), offensive tackle Aaron Klovos (Graham) and tight end Levi Horn (Spokane), are the other Washington natives.

"I know a lot of players on the team, so it's a big game for me," Long said. "They didn't recruit me in high school and I was only an hour away, so it was kind of like a slap in the face. I like to play those guys and show that they should have recruited me."

Contrarily, there are no Oregonians on the Huskies' roster.

Former Oregon quarterback Johnny DuRocher may be the closest thing. The Graham, Wash., native signed with the Ducks in 2003 but since transferred, choosing to partake in a rebuilding effort in Seattle.

DuRocher currently sits second on the Huskies' depth chart, but is hoping to help the future of a Washington team that has not won a Pac-10 game in its last 10 tries.

The Ducks hope to make that streak 11 when the series resumes Saturday.

"It's like fighting or going to war with the guys that you hate," Long said. "It's a huge game for us."

landrews@dailyemerald.com

## Preview: Willingham newcomer to rivalry

Continued from page 2B

wrong like the fourth quarter and finishing strong."

Despite a difference in wins and losses, there is a common denominator for both programs — a knowledgeable head coach capable of turning around a program at any time.

Washington is guided by first-year head coach Tyrone Willingham, who found instant success at Notre Dame in 2002. After a 10-win season and being named National Coach of the Year kicked off his career with the Irish, Willingham was let go after the following two years netted a combined 11-12 record.

Willingham has taken his team to a bowl game in six of his 10 seasons as a head coach and in his first year at the helm at Stanford, he turned that program around as well. In 1995, the Cardinal won seven

games and reached the Liberty Bowl. Four seasons later, Willingham guided Stanford to the Rose Bowl.

Now he is in the Northwest, coaching a team despised by Duck fans. Why isn't it just a simple dislike?

For instance, after the Huskies won at Autzen in 2002, they rushed to the Ducks' emblem at midfield and danced on the 'O.' They even decided to pose for team pictures in the middle of the field. That is just one incident in a long list.

"Every week I try to figure out something to say to get the guys up and to get them excited about our opponent," Bellotti said. "The rivalry itself will grow in the players' minds. We have players here that remember some of those incidents of the past, that will certainly be fueled by that."

The talk of the week has been the downright ugliness of the rivalry, which Willingham is starting to get acquainted with.

"There is a certain segment of our fans who believe that this is the most important rivalry that we have, there is another group that believe Washington State is the most important rivalry that we have," Willingham said. "So, I have kind of split myself accordingly. This week, this is the most important rivalry that we have."

Throw out the stats in a rivalry game. If Oregon feels the same way as its counterpart, the blows will be dealt both ways and in the end, the team that wants it more and plays with the most heart will win.

smiller@dailyemerald.com

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