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■ In my opinion

# Ducks need fans' support for the entire game, not just first half

Do the approximately 15,000 fans missing in attendance at the start of each second half at Autzen Stadium this season have an effect on the momentum of the game?

A variety of loyalties range from extreme support (Duck fans who stay in the stadium during half-time), to convenient support (fans who live it up at tailgate parties until they are sober enough to return).

The bottom line is that nobody knows for sure whether those fans have a negative effect on the Ducks. What people do know is that Oregon has hit a roadblock entering the third quarter at home this season.

The Ducks have given up points in each of the last two home games and nearly did so again against Division I-AA Montana in the first home game. Then-No. 23 Fresno State nailed a field goal to tie the game on the first possession of the second half on Sept. 17. One week later against top-ranked USC, the Trojans scored a touchdown just one minute 46 seconds into the second half.

If a quarter of the fans are missing for the first possession of the second half, that deflates not only the crowd but the Ducks as well. And it shows, as the Ducks have allowed the momentum to swing in consecutive home games against ranked opponents.



SHAWN MILLER  
FULL-COURT PRESS

My solution: Get your seat back in your seat before kickoff.

It is easy to remember and doesn't require mental aptitude to follow.

Halftime is 20 minutes. Say it takes a good five minutes to walk to and from the bathroom, a concession stand or a tailgate. I'm sure it doesn't take more than 10 minutes to stand in line for a stall or some food, so that leaves a tailgate party as being the only excuse to be late to the second half.

I understand that when you get there, it takes time to fire up the grill, cook the food and chow it down. And hey, Oregon has owned a halftime lead at each game, so it isn't like you will miss an important series of the game if you are five minutes late. Wrong.

Sometimes the first series of the second half is the most important part of the game. It has everything to do with momentum, and in the end, do you think things would be

different had Oregon shut down USC on its first drive of the second half?

I'm not blaming the fans for a lack of a defensive stop to open the second half, I just think the crowd could do its part to help the team.

Obviously the fans aren't going to win or lose a game for the Ducks, but when Autzen Stadium is ranked among the top 10 college football stadiums in the nation, it isn't because of its special hot dogs or luxurious restrooms.

The fans are the reason programs are afraid to visit. The fans are the energy and the electricity the Ducks use to zap their opponents. The fans are a major reason in the signing of top-caliber athletes.

The Ducks need each and every fan in attendance for the entire game. It is ridiculous to see thousands of fans leaving with several minutes to play in the first half and returning several minutes into the second. I'm sure every stadium has its fair share of "fair weather" fans, but I think Autzen has too many. Too many people leave too early and return too late.

I have one simple question to those fans: Are you here to watch your Ducks or are you here to say you were at the game?

smiller@dailyemerald.com

■ In my opinion

# Old clichés come through in the clutch with advice for the Ducks

Sports, most notably football, are notorious for their painfully drab clichés.

The list is quite lengthy — we brought our "A" game, we finally got the monkey off our backs, it was a total team effort, there's no I in team, we win as a team and lose as a team, we beat ourselves, we didn't get the job done, my hat is off to them.

Yet one of the oldest, most commonly used clichés — "Take it one game at a time" — may never be more true than now for the Oregon Ducks, coming off a monumental road win against previously ranked Arizona State.

It was a win that saw the Ducks rack up 512 total yards of offense compared with 330 for the Sun Devils.

Oregon held Arizona State's ground attack to a mere 53 yards. That will win a lot of games for the Ducks.

The weapons are there. The leadership is there. And after an emotional conference victory away from Autzen Stadium, the confidence should be there.

The biggest key for Oregon down the stretch may be its ability to not overlook anybody.

The Ducks final five opponents, including the Huskies, have a combined 13-13 record.



LUKE ANDREWS  
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After Saturday's game with Washington, Oregon heads to Arizona to face a Wildcats squad that has lost eight of its last 10 Pacific-10 Conference games.

Should the Ducks defeat the Huskies and Wildcats — two teams with a combined 2-8 record — Oregon will be 7-1, bowl eligible and entering its bye week to prepare for Cal. The 18th-ranked Bears (5-1 overall, 2-1 conference) are arguably the toughest remaining team on Oregon's schedule, but the Ducks will have the benefit of playing them at home.

Washington State awaits in Pullman a week after Cal. The Ducks and Cougars have engaged in some epic battles in Martin Stadium, including Oregon's 41-38 comeback win last season. Oregon has won four out of the last five games on the road against WSU, dating back to a 51-29 win during the 1998 season.

Washington State (3-2, 0-2) has

appeared vulnerable at home as well this season, losing to lowly Stanford 24-21 a week ago.

A win in Pullman would set the Ducks up nicely for the Civil War with Oregon State, which, because of its exposed secondary, is likely trembling in Corvallis with the thought of Kellen Clemens and Oregon's new powerful spread-offense.

The offense is clicking and the defense looks fast and stingy. Terrence Whitehead is back and the backfield looks as strong as ever.

If the Ducks play with the purpose they did last week against Arizona State, there's not an unbeatable team remaining on the schedule.

"It feels good," senior defensive end Devan Long said of having a 5-1 record. "But 5-1 could easily be 6-5. We have got to keep focus on every game and not get ahead of ourselves and not get cocky. If we start thinking about (upcoming games), bad things will happen."

So, while the future gleams with encouragement and the schedule paves the possibility for a storybook season, the cliché continues to ring true: The Ducks cannot afford to look past anybody.

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