

In my opinion

The key to a perfect season lies in the coach's thumbs

I am a superior coach/player and I will win the national championship this season.

With all of the talk about Oregon and its No. 13 ranking in the first BCS poll, I think it is time to point out my success. Without tooting my own horn, I remain undefeated. I didn't lose to top-ranked USC. In fact, I came up with a game-winning touchdown in the final minute to seal the Trojans' fate. And the other games were cakewalks.

I do want to make one thing clear, the only icing I do after a game is on my thumbs. I am tough, but so is each and every team I play.

Well... let me back up a bit. I play NCAA Football on my Playstation2 every week. My ritual is to play whomever the Ducks are playing that week in a pre-game game. I have been doing it for years, and I have been winning for years.

It began as a young boy's passion for the sport of football. The night before each game, my best friend and I

would sit down and battle it out. In the end, Mighty Oregon would rout whichever team it would play and the excitement would carry over to the next day's game.

I have played some three-plus hour games at all times of the night, usually ending with more than 1,000 yards of total offense and nearly 75 points. And the nice thing is when I am running low on time, I pick how long I want the game to go.

I can remember this one game last year. I swear my offense couldn't move down the field late in the fourth quarter. I went three and out on three consecutive possessions, while my friend erased a two-touchdown deficit to take the lead. Down by five and with less than a minute to play, I turned the ball over. Son of a bi... I was so pissed! But I didn't give up. He wanted to rub my face in it. Two plays later he was in my red zone. A smart-ass comment and one play later, I had intercepted the ball and returned it to the 15-yard



SHAWN MILLER
FULL-COURT PRESS

line. I knew I could do it. It didn't matter that the win was 85 yards away and the clock was under 20 seconds. I had no time-outs, so I had to let it fly.

"Forget the prevent, why don't you blitz, wimp," I hollered.

That was all I needed because guess who caught the ball, outran the defense and won the game in the final seconds? That's right, I did.

Two nights ago I played Arizona and it didn't start out so well. I overlooked them and before I was able to turn back, I was down 21-7. Three times an Arizona receiver had gotten behind my

defense for a long touchdown. I knew what I had to do: Establish the run.

I used my running back on nearly every down for an entire possession, working down to tie the game. I even went on to force the run, which in turn, brought eight or nine defenders into the box. Thank you. A play-action pass later, the game was tied with 32 seconds remaining. I did force a three and out, had a shot at a 51-yard field goal as time ran out, but I pulled a Florida State and missed it wide right.

Both teams missed long field goals in the first overtime, I ran the ball each time on a three-play touchdown drive in the second OT, and I picked off an errant pass to seal the 28-21 victory. Great comeback, but I should have been on my 'A' game.

Now, I want the Ducks to continue to be successful and garner all the praise and spotlight. But it isn't fair when a one-loss team gets more attention than an undefeated. It is time to give me my props and until I lose,

cheer for me to represent the Ducks in the Rose Bowl. That is the kind of fun I have.

Playing NCAA Football is all the craze now. It doesn't matter how old or young you are, as long as you know the difference between a triangle, square, circle and X. Even Oregon has a simulated version of its upcoming game each week on its website.

I have played countless games and won every time. It doesn't matter if it is a blowout or a barnburner down to the final possession. I have come up with game-saving picks in the end zone in the closing seconds and three-quarters of the field bombs over the defensive backs outstretched arms on a hail mary.

In the end I finish with a 'W' and if it looks like I won't, then I hit that little button on the back that restarts the game.

Because it doesn't count as a loss if it hasn't gone final.

smiller@dailyemerald.com

In my opinion

Ducks' past provides incentive for seniors to continue legacy

Kellen Clemens to Demetrius Williams: It's a combination that has connected 41 times for 772 yards and eight touchdowns this season. They are a pair of senior leaders who are getting the job done for the 15th-ranked Oregon Ducks.

Terrence Whitehead is another. He strikes fear in opposing defenses with his running and pass-catching abilities, deceptive mixture of strength and speed and his pure tenacious, play-to-the-whistle attitude.

Defensively, Anthony Trucks, Devan Long, Aaron Gipson and Justin Phinisee are others.

Indeed, the list of senior leadership on this year's Oregon squad is distinguished and they've helped make last season's dismal 5-6 record a distant memory.

"There are a lot of seniors and, as I've said before, those seniors are coming to the forefront because they are also our performers and our contributors," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "Their voice, their word, carries more weight because they are also doing it on the field."

Their evident on-field talents aside, this group possesses the one intangible that cannot be taught — experience.

Truly, they've seen the best of times and the worst of times in their



LUKE ANDREWS
EXCESSIVE CELEBRATION

four years with the Ducks.

Take the 2002 season for example.

After starting the season 6-0, Jason Fife and the one-time No. 6 Ducks lost six of their last seven games, including the Seattle Bowl to Wake Forest.

Oregon is currently 6-1. The differences between the 2002 squad and this year's team are undeniable.

The 2005 Oregon Ducks are saying the right things, doing the right things, and know what it takes to avoid a monumental slide that parallels that fateful 2002 season.

"We've been here when we're really good and we've been here when we've been bad," Long, the team's sack leader, said. "We know what it takes to win and we know what not to do to lose."

Clemens and company are also without the pressure of following the most successful season — and

team — in Oregon history as the 2002 team was forced to do after Joey Harrington's drive to the Fiesta Bowl and 11-1 record in 2001.

Instead, the goal entering this season was simply to restore Oregon's bowl tradition, and that mission was accomplished last weekend with a 45-21 thrashing of the Huskies, which gave Oregon the needed six wins for bowl eligibility.

The remaining schedule also stacks more favorably for the Ducks this season. Rather than facing names such as Andrew Walter of Arizona State, Carson Palmer of USC, Reggie Williams of Washington and Steven Jackson of Oregon State, as the 2002 Ducks did, Oregon's final four opponents this season have a combined 4-9 Pacific-10 Conference record.

They know what is at stake and know how to get what they want.


"Our past and history has given us experience so we know how to respond," Phinisee said.

Therefore, beginning Saturday in Tucson, don't expect to see a let-down from the Ducks.

These seniors won't let it happen.

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