

■ In my opinion



SHAWN MILLER
FULL-COURT PRESS

10 wins still possibility if team sticks together

It would be easy to say Copeland Bryan ruined the Oregon season, but not truthful.

Bryan, an Arizona senior defensive end, sacked Oregon quarterback Kellen Clemens when he was knocked from Saturday's game with an ankle injury that will most likely end his playing career at Oregon. Bryan was also involved in the tackle that forced reserve Dennis Dixon from the game with a concussion on the ensuing possession.

He took out our first- and second-string quarterbacks! Not exactly.

The season isn't over and Bryan isn't the player to blame if Oregon doesn't finish with 10 or 11 wins. Whether the Ducks will make it to a lucrative bowl game is up to the current players.

All season long each Duck has said that this team picks each other up. That has been proved by the Oregon offense, which averaged 40 points per game in the three prior to Arizona after a league-opening loss to top-ranked USC. And recently, the defense proved itself Saturday at Arizona. With a third-string quarterback leading the sputtering offense, the defense forced two turnovers, scoring on one, and allowed only 51 yards in the fourth quarter.

Now is the perfect time to see whether what they said is true or if it is just sports jargon.

Should the Ducks play each game one at a time (another sports version of a politically correct thing to say), they could find themselves 10-1, ranked in the top 10 and headed to the Bowl Championship Series. It isn't too far out there to believe that, and that is exactly what new starting quarterback Dennis Dixon and the rest of the flock need to buy into if there is a chance.

The bye week couldn't come at a better time, allowing Dixon two weeks to not only shake off his concussion, but to get first-string reps in practice. All the nuts and bolts should be figured out and bruises healed before Oregon's next game, at home against No. 24 California.

Autzen Stadium will be full of Oregon fans salivating at a chance of revenge for last season's more-than-disappointing loss to the Bears. If Dixon can establish the passing game early, with several completions in the first couple of drives, Oregon can feel comfortable with him running the offense and help his confidence level.

A win over Cal would be huge in the battle of confidence and that is exactly what Oregon will need as they travel to a probably-snowy Pullman, Wash., to play Washington State. The Cougars have proved they can not only score points, but can take any team to the wire; and Pullman is always a dangerous place to play. However, should Dixon establish himself early, the confidence level should lead to an Oregon victory.

To close out the season is hated rival Oregon State at home. It will be an ugly game, but one the Ducks can win if they pick each other up and play with confidence and poise.

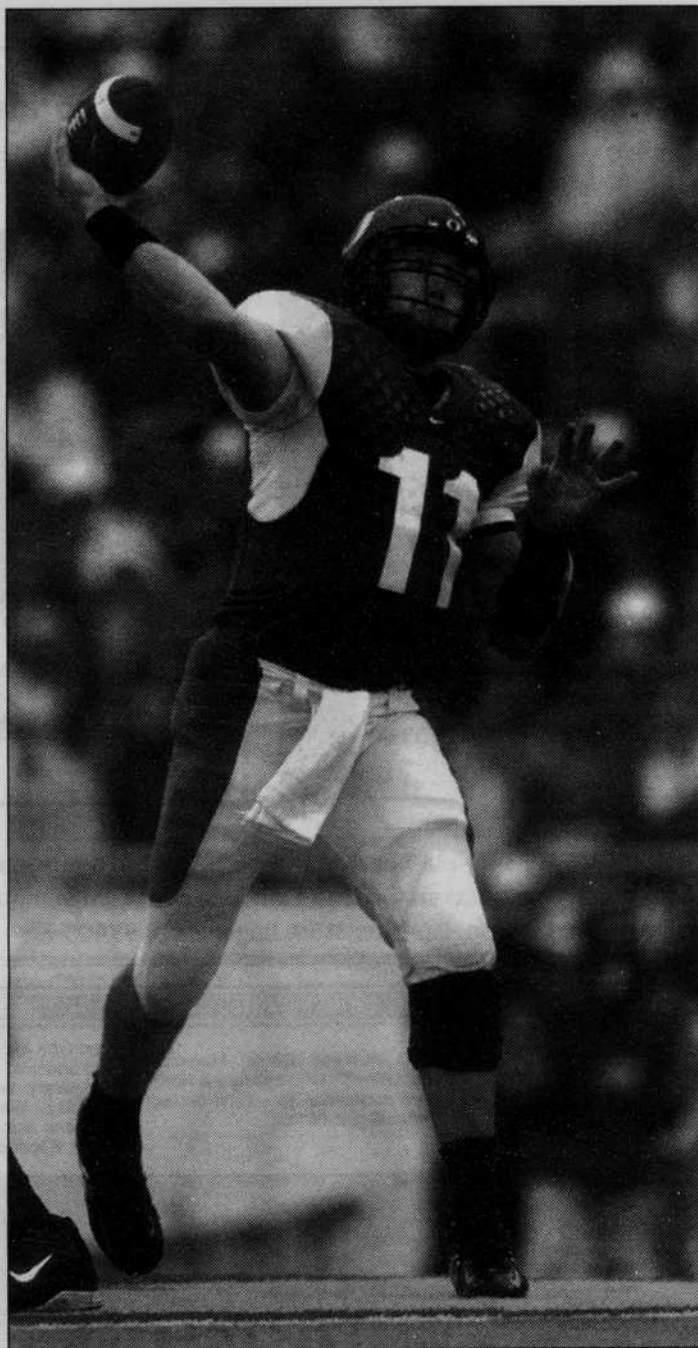
It has been a common theme this season, and now is the time for it to be reality for Oregon: When your teammate is down, pick him up.

smiller@dailyemerald.com

■ Football recap

Ducks overcome Clemens' injury

The senior's college career is most likely over after fracturing his ankle in the third quarter



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTO EDITOR

Quarterback Kellen Clemens will be sidelined for the remainder of the season after fracturing his left ankle during the third quarter of the Ducks' 28-21 victory over Arizona Saturday. Clemens was named one of the seven finalists for the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award last week.

BY LUKE ANDREWS
SPORTS REPORTER

With offense struggling, it was a hungry defense and special teams that allowed No. 15 Oregon (7-1 overall, 4-1 conference) to hang on to a 28-21 win over Arizona (1-6, 0-4) Saturday — their fourth straight victory of the season and seventh straight against the Wildcats.

But the win came with a price.

Senior quarterback Kellen Clemens, a finalist for the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award, injured his ankle after being sacked in the third quarter by Arizona's Copeland Bryan.

With the game tied at 21 early in the fourth quarter, linebacker Brent Haberly recovered a Mike Bell fumble and returned it 34 yards for the go-ahead touchdown to put the Ducks in front for good.

"The hole opened up and I was going to come through and put one on (Bell), and then I saw (the ball) bounce up and my eyes lit up and I grabbed it and saw the quarterback out of the corner of my eye and knew I had to make him miss," Haberly said.

Strong safety Anthony Trucks then caused another Bell fumble and linebacker Blair Phillips recovered the ball to halt Arizona's final scoring threat and allow Oregon to run out the clock.

X-rays Sunday morning confirmed Clemens had a fractured left ankle, and he was scheduled to undergo surgery this morning. Full recovery is expected to take three to six months. He is not expected to be back for a bowl game.

The injury comes one week after Clemens set the Autzen Stadium record with 36 completions against

Washington. The Burns native set a school record for career completion percentage (60.9 percent) and also sits second all-time on Oregon's touchdown passes list with 61, one behind Danny O'Neil.

"Obviously, Kellen's loss is tremendous to us because I think he's playing as good as anyone in the nation," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "Certainly, there's nobody more valuable to their team."

Second-string quarterback Dennis Dixon was also sidelined after suffering a concussion in the third quarter, one possession after Clemens was hurt. According to Bellotti, Dixon most likely will be the starter when the Ducks play California following their bye next week.

"Dennis and Brady (Leaf) need to be ready to step up and get this thing done," Bellotti said. "We have playmakers, we just have to distribute the football the same way we've done. I've got a lot of confidence in our offense."

The Duck offense racked up 307 total yards against Arizona, but much of the offensive production (164 yards) came in the first quarter — a quarter that saw Oregon jump out to a 21-0 lead.

Oregon struck first with a 54-yard catch and run by wideout Cameron Colvin before Justin Phinisee's 69-yard punt return for a score put the Ducks ahead 14-0.

Demetrius Williams' 57-yard reception from Clemens set up a four-yard touchdown run by freshman Jonathan Stewart, his fifth touchdown of the season, lifting Oregon to a three-touchdown advantage early.

But Stewart's run would be the last offensive touchdown for the

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■ Football notes

Defense steps up when needed most

After a dismal first quarter the Ducks take a victory after both Brent Haberly and Blair Phillips recover fourth quarter fumbles

BY SHAWN MILLER
SPORTS EDITOR

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said it best. "It wasn't pretty at times, but every win is a great win."

That sums up the Ducks' outlook after escaping from Tuscon, Ariz., with a seven-point victory over the one-win Arizona Wildcats Saturday.

Oregon committed three turnovers, nine penalties, missed three field goals and gained only 307 yards of total offense — 180 yards less than its season average.

"We knew the whole time we were going to come out with the win," Oregon defensive end Devan Long said.

Despite the confidence, both teams, as well as the officiating crew, spent most of the first quarter shooting themselves in the foot. Each team missed a field goal and threw an interception; meanwhile the Ducks lost two forced turnovers. One was due to a questionable call by an official, the other because of a pass interference that

wasn't necessary.

The second quarter featured three consecutive three-and-outs for the Oregon offense, which managed only 16 yards. The Ducks were also flagged twice for 10 yards in the quarter.

The third quarter hurt Oregon most, as it turned the ball over twice, missed a field goal to the right and had two quarterbacks knocked out of the game.

Oregon placekicker Matt Evensen was wide right on a 42-yard field goal attempt less than four minutes into the second half. However, that was the least of Oregon's worries.

Kellen Clemens left with just less than eight minutes remaining in the third quarter with an ankle injury that will likely end the senior's Oregon career. Reserve quarterback Dennis Dixon suffered a concussion on the next series, forcing third-string quarterback Brady Leaf into action for the entire fourth quarter of a tied game.

Evensen missed a 36-yard field goal after cornerback Justin Phinisee returned an interception to the Arizona 26-yard line near the end of the

third quarter.

Mistake after mistake plagued the Ducks, but with the game tied and a third-string quarterback at the helm, the Oregon defense took over the fourth quarter.

Arizona running back Mike Bell, who rushed for 158 yards with one touchdown on 20 carries, was shut down in the final 15 minutes. On three carries, he gained only 6 yards and fumbled the ball twice.

Oregon linebacker Brent Haberly returned the first fumble 34 yards for the game-winning touchdown with 12:14 remaining in the game. Strong safety Anthony Trucks forced the second fumble into the hands of Blair Phillips with 4:43 to play at the Oregon 33-yard line.

"Certainly Arizona helped us and didn't help themselves in that situation," Bellotti said. "Our kids were in the right place and made plays happen and the defense bowed their back and said 'We aren't going to let them get any.'"

Arizona wasn't without chances as it failed on a fourth and five from the Oregon 29-yard line with 7:58 in the fourth quarter. The Wildcats also had the ball in Oregon territory on their final two possessions of the game.

smiller@dailyemerald.com