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I think that it's neat for them to be able
to have this successful season."

Mike Bellotti, Oregon coach on this season's success

■ In my opinion



SHAWN MILLER
FULL-COURT PRESS

Clutch catch helps change Kent into football hero

Three months ago, who honestly pictured Jordan Kent hauling in a clutch touchdown reception in a pivotal situation? Forget three months ago, how about three days ago?

Whatever your thoughts were, whether you predicted him to become a star or a flop, Saturday's 68-yard touchdown catch and run in the third quarter turned out to be a game-changing play. But it wasn't without hard work, and the past three months haven't been a cake walk for the 6-foot-5 student athlete competing in a trio of collegiate sports for the first time in the Pacific-10 Conference since J.D. Hill in 1967-70.

"You don't stop working. You've got to keep working," Kent said. "Coach says luck is just opportunity meeting hard work. Maybe it was divine intervention or something, but I was just really happy that ... I could do something to help this team out. The best feeling is just knowing I could help these guys out."

Prior to Saturday, Kent only had two catches. The first, an over-the-shoulder 41-yard grab against Division I-AA Montana, and the other a 5-yard catch in mop-up duty. Other than that, Kent had faced learning the ins and outs of a sport he hadn't played since middle school without a lot of playing time or success.

So what was running through his mind while he was sprinting down the field? "I wasn't even really thinking. I was just making sure I crossed that goal line," Kent said. "The ball just happened to fall in my hands. ... I was so happy I could finally help this team out."

Kent said he had caught the play during practice and the coaches decided to throw it in for the game.

"I thought it might have been overthrown by 20 yards," Oregon coach Mike Bellotti said. "He's got great speed. We've said that all along. That's what he can do right now and his role can keep expanding. If he makes that type of play we've got to figure out a way to get him in the game more often."

So has the experiment been worth it? Is one touchdown catch worth a scholarship?

Damn skippy! When Oregon needed a big play the most, it looked to the player with a game-breaking skill: speed. And Kent reinforced his coaches' belief in him as he not only got behind but outran his defender to put the Ducks up by two possessions.

The touchdown didn't turn out to be the game-winner, but no one in the stadium could question the importance and momentum swing it had. Nobody was more ecstatic than Kent was after the game.

"I wasn't worried about, 'Oh, it was a touchdown for me,'" Kent said. "No, this was a touchdown for the team and more so a touchdown for those guys. Everything they've done for me in the last couple of months — (They have) helped me learn everything, helped me feel like a part of the family, not making it hard for me to adjust. I'm just so thankful for that."

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■ Women's basketball

Richards shines in Oregon defeat

The Ducks fall to the 21st ranked Temple Owls in the Women's Sports Foundation Classic final

BY JEFFREY DRANSFELDT
SPORTS REPORTER

Chelsea Richards said the shot looked and felt good off her fingertips, but it hit the back of the rim and bounced out in front of 3,539 in the championship game of the Women's Sports Foundation Classic.

Wagner's miss in the final seconds typified a defense-dominated game that No. 21 Temple won 51-46 against Oregon on Saturday night at McArthur Court.

Trading baskets and leads, Oregon (1-1) took a 44-43 lead with 3:21 left when Gabrielle Richards took a pass amidst three Temple defenders, made the basket and was fouled. She added Oregon's last basket for a 46-43 lead before Temple's defense clamped down.

Temple (2-0) had three consecutive offensive rebounds and scored eight consecutive points to give them a three-point lead and set up Wagner's shot. Oregon point guard Kaela Chapdelaine ran a pick-and-roll twice as the second try gave Wagner room.

Although she missed the shot, Wagner said after the game that she had been confident it would go in despite Temple's frenetic defense.

"They are never going to let you have a wide-open three," Wagner said.

Temple's Candice Dupree said her team's defense was focused on shutting down Oregon's offense.

"Every player on that team can shoot. We knew we had to get that stop," Dupree said.

One night after scoring 80 points in a season-opening win against St. Francis, Oregon turned to its post players early on.

Oregon's Richards made her presence felt, settling deep within Temple's defense and scoring eight first-half points against a tall Temple front line. Dupree, a 6-foot-2 preseason All-America candidate, showed why she deserves attention with 11 points and seven rebounds in the first half.

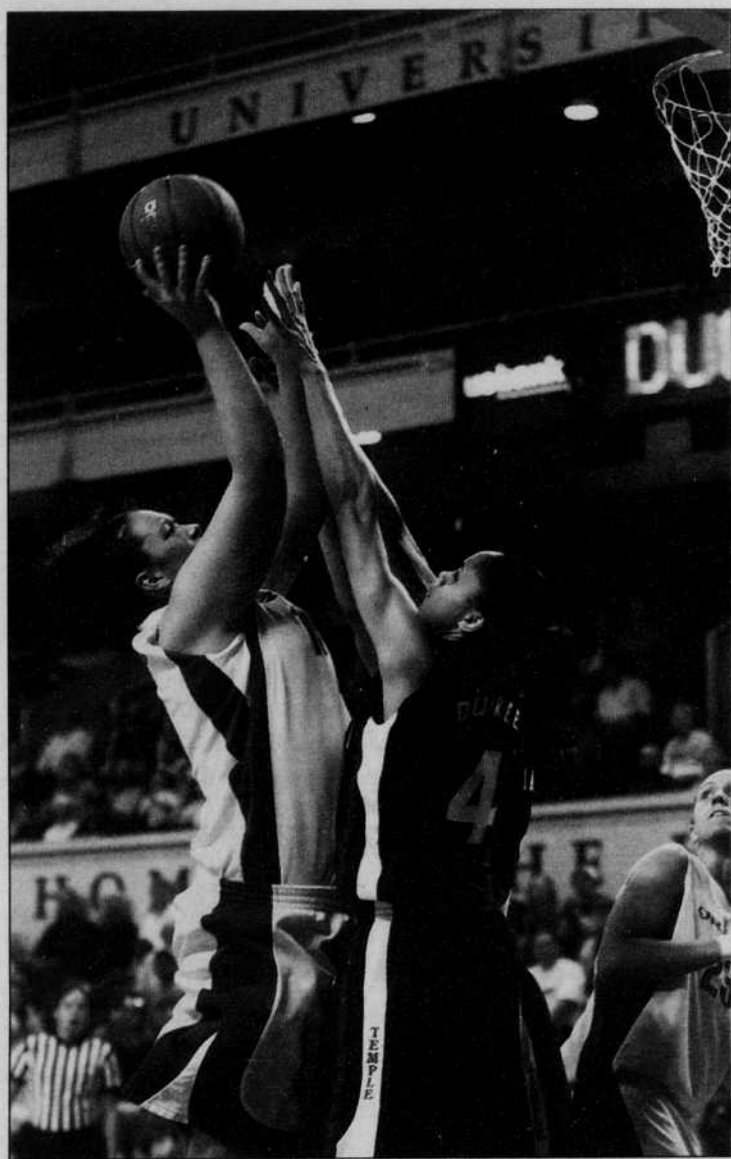
Every time Temple needed a big basket Dupree scored, sinking the go-ahead basket en route to Tournament MVP Honors. The Wooden Award candidate finished with 21 points and 15 rebounds. Richards, on the All-Tournament Team, posted career highs in points (20) and rebounds (12). Her 20 points broke the 19-point record she had set the night before against St. Francis.

Temple's defense adjusted in the second half and forced Oregon outside. Part Temple defense, part Oregon's shot selection, the Ducks played on their heels, compared to attacking with three-pointers replacing inside shots, Wagner said.

"We weren't attacking like we were; we weren't getting to the basket," Wagner said. "We were relying too much on Gabe to ... do all our hard work."

Two games in, Richards is shooting .593 and replacing the inside scoring lost when Cathrine Kraayeveld and Andrea

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ZANE RITT | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon center Gabrielle Richards tries to score against Temple's 6-foot-2 forward Candice Dupree. Richards scored 20 points and had 12 rebounds while Dupree, an All-America candidate, scored 21 points and grabbed 15 rebounds.

■ Duck football

Martinez' kick finishes Cougars, 34-31

The No. 11 Ducks alternate QBs Brady Leaf and Dennis Dixon on their way to their ninth win of the year over Washington State

BY LUKE ANDREWS
SPORTS REPORTER

PULLMAN, Wash. — For the second consecutive week, the Oregon Ducks (9-1 overall, 6-1 Pacific-10 Conference) managed a late score to win the game.

And for the second straight week, a different quarterback guided their final drive.

This time, Dennis Dixon engineered a 14-play, 73-yard drive to set up a 19-yard field goal for Paul Martinez with one second remaining, lifting the Ducks to a 34-31 victory against the Washington State Cougars (3-7, 0-7) in front of 27,595 at Martin Stadium.

Last weekend against California, Dixon split time with fellow sophomore Brady Leaf, but it was Leaf who guided Oregon to the victory in overtime.

On the final drive in Pullman on Saturday night, Dixon got the call and was a perfect 4 of 4 passing for 42 yards. He also ran for 16 yards on the drive to set up Martinez' final kick.

"It was loud and cold. It was the worst conditions ever," Dixon said. "But you've got to play through that, which me and Brady did tonight. It feels excellent."

The two-quarterback system was again effective for the Ducks. Dixon finished 16 of 22 passing for 197 yards and a touchdown, and Leaf, in a homecoming of sorts, was 12 of 17 for 99 yards and a touchdown. Leaf's older brother, former Cougar quarterback Ryan, led

Washington State to the Rose Bowl in 1997-98.

"It's great to get a win out here. I've come to a lot of games here and dreamed about playing in this stadium since I was little kid," Leaf said.

The win is Oregon's sixth straight of the season, its only loss coming on Sept. 24 against top-ranked USC. At 9-1 the Ducks are off to their best start since finishing 11-1 in 2001-02.

"I'm proud of this group of kids," Oregon coach Mike Bellotti said. "They've been a special group all season. I think it's neat for them to be able to have this successful season."

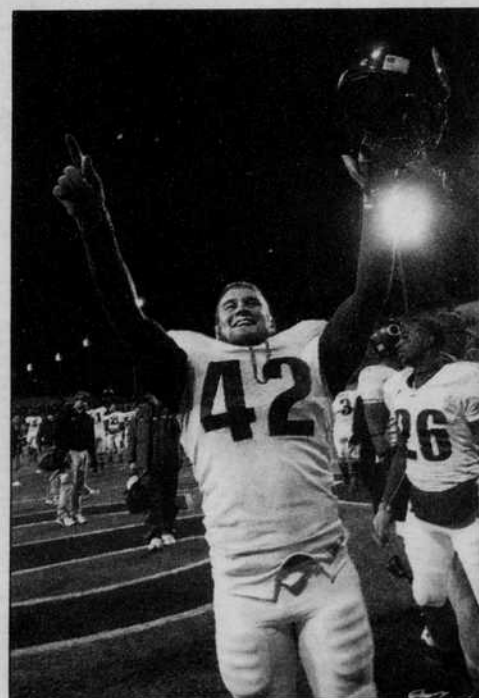
Oregon trailed at the half against Washington State after Cougar quarterback and Eugene native Alex Brink connected with Jason Hill on a 40-yard desperation pass as time expired, giving the Cougars a 14-10 lead at the half.

Washington State extended its lead on the first possession of the second half, driving 80 yards in six plays, capped by Brink's 34-yard pass to tailback Jerome Harrison. Harrison finished with 181 yards of total offense.

"Jerome Harrison is, obviously, as good as he is publicized to be," Bellotti said.

Oregon responded with a 62-yard drive that ended when Leaf found wideout James Finley for an eight-yard touchdown, which cut the deficit to 21-16. Leaf was six of eight on the drive for 57 yards. A two-point conversion failed.

Defensive end Darius Sanders recorded his first career interception on Washington State's



MARCUS LARSON | FOR THE EMERALD

Linebacker Brent Habery points to the Oregon crowd chanting "BCS, BCS," after Oregon's 34-31 win after a last-second field goal against Washington State on Saturday night.

ensuing possession, setting up the Ducks next score, a 23-yard reverse by wideout Cameron Colvin, which gave Oregon a 24-21 lead after

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