

Sports

Questions OSU must answer in rebuild

Gary Horowitz
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

CORVALLIS – When it comes to Pac-12 Conference football, there is a consensus prediction: Oregon State will be at the bottom of the North Division.

No surprise there.

The Beavers are coming off a 1-11 season (0-9 Pac-12) and their only win was a narrow escape against lower-division opponent Portland State, a winless team last season.

But enough about the past.

OSU has renewed hope with first-year head coach Jonathan Smith. He knows what it takes to win big in Corvallis, even if he last accomplished it nearly two decades ago.

Here are five key questions facing the Beavers as they open preseason practice Aug. 3 in preparation for the Sept. 1 season opener at Ohio State.

1. Is Jake Luton the real deal?

We got a small sample of Luton last season, who suffered a season-ending back injury in Game 4 at Washington State.

At 6-foot-7, 234-pounds, Luton has the size and arm strength to be a good fit for Smith's pro-style offense.

Luton is the only quarterback on the roster with significant Division I experience and his senior leadership will be key for a team that needs to build confidence early. Sophomore Conor Blount and junior college transfer Jack Colletto, the best runner among the quarterbacks, are waiting in the wings.

2. Will the defensive line hold up?

There was little push from the defensive front last season, which produced

See OSU, Page 2B



Oregon State linebacker Jonathan Willis, center, celebrates after a sack in last season's 15-14 loss to Stanford. SCOTT OLMOS/USA TODAY SPORTS

Five teammates key to Herbert's Heisman chase

Pete Martini
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USA TODAY NETWORK

The hype is already here for Oregon quarterback Justin Herbert as he prepares for his junior season.

In June, Las Vegas gave Herbert the fourth-best odds of winning the Heisman Trophy, and during the past couple weeks, Herbert was included on the watch lists for both the Davey O'Brien Award and Maxwell Award, two of the top college football honors.

With the Ducks set to open the season at Sept. 1 against Bowling Green at Autzen Stadium, Herbert isn't going to sneak up on anybody — he's on the national radar.

It's unclear if Herbert can live up to the hype, but to do so, he'll need to play a full season.

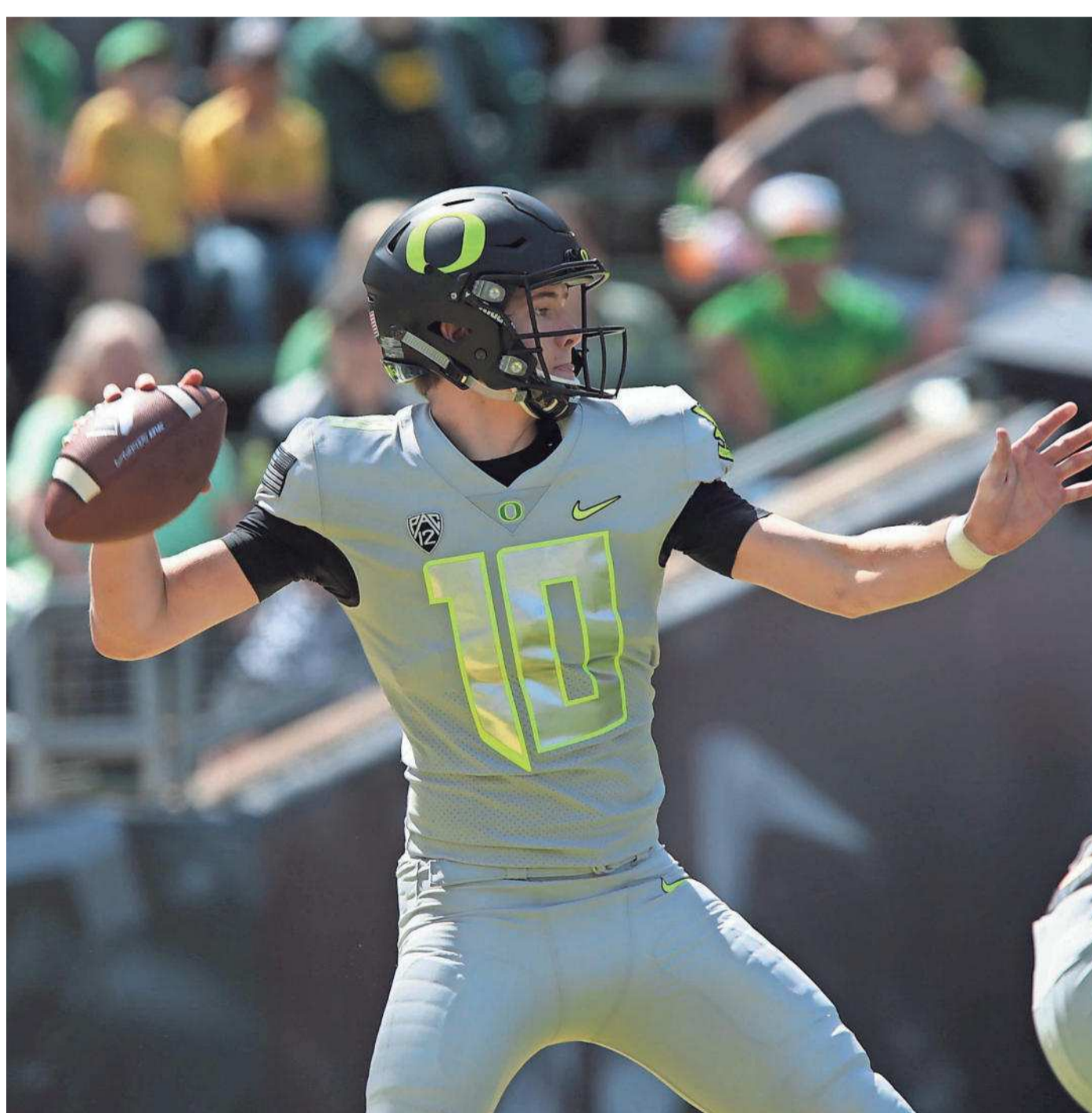
As a freshman in 2016 under head coach Mark Helfrich, Herbert was thrust into the starting role midseason after Oregon struggled with quarterback Dakota Prukop. In the partial season of work, Herbert threw for 1,936 yards, 19 touchdowns and four interceptions.

Last season under head coach Willie Taggart, Herbert performed well when he was on the field, but a fractured collarbone sidelined him for five games. He finished with 1,983 yards, 15 touchdowns and five interceptions.

This season, Herbert has his third head coach in three seasons — Mario Cristobal — and he'll need to stay healthy if he's going to join Marcus Mariota as the only Heisman Trophy winners in Ducks history.

Herbert also needs playmakers around him, and Oregon is lacking some of the playmaking experience that it's had in the past. There is no Darren Carrington, Bralon Addison or Josh Huff at wide receiver. No LaMichael James or Royce Freeman at running back.

Here is a look at the top five possible



Oregon quarterback Justin Herbert (10) throws the ball in the first half at Autzen Stadium during an April 2017 game. SCOTT OLMOS-USA TODAY SPORTS

See HEISMAN, Page 2B

The agony of halibut fishing birthed friendship



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

OTIS – There's a line from a column written almost three decades ago that sticks in my mind.

I can't remember the exact words, but it went something like: "Frank had a look on his face like a guy who had taken a grand piano up 15 flights of stairs only to find out that he was supposed to be in the building next door."

The comparison was inspired by a halibut fishing trip out of Newport.

My newly minted fishing buddy Frank King had latched onto something

stupendous.

After about 30 minutes of straining to reel it up, first the charter skipper and then the first mate took over for Frank, spelling each other.

"It's probably between 70 and 100 pounds," they both guesstimated about the flatfish what was on the end of the line.

Sort of ...

About an hour into the battle, they handed the rod back to the bone-weary angler to let him bat cleanup.

It was, in fact, a halibut.

Two, actually.

Each of them was almost identical in size, and both about a half-inch less than the legal minimum length, meaning that they had to be released.

Which prompted the comparison to the piano-mover in the building without an elevator.

Frank went into the cabin to lie down, and I ended up catching a halibut for him.

We've been fast friends ever since, although our fishing adventures petered out long ago with the departures and deaths of many of our Statesman Journal fishing companions such as John Ericksen and Jerry Easterling.

"I sure miss Larry," Frank said about the late Larry Roby, the Statesman editor who introduced us when I was a new arrival and Frank served as the coastal correspondent for the paper.

"And I sure miss those fishing trips that we took together, Henry," he added

with a smile. "I had a lot of fun."

Me, too, which is why I stopped by to reminisce on my way back from a clamming clinic at Netarts.

Frank, 95, is part of America's Greatest Generation. He served as an aircraft radio technician during World War II.

There's a "Semper Fi" bumper sticker on a car in his driveway in rural Otis, an oxymoron if ever there was one.

He's lived in the same house since he moved there from a rental in Taft, south of Lincoln City, in 1991.

We talked about our fishing trips on the late editor John Ericksen's boat, the Agdenes, which was berthed at the Embarcadero in Newport.

See HALIBUT, Page 2B