

PAC-12 FOOTBALL



Thomas Boyd/The Associated Press

Oregon quarterback Justin Herbert looks for a receiver downfield earlier this season against Portland State.

Pass attack faces test

By James Crepea
The Oregonian/OregonLive

Oregon's dynamic passing tandem of Justin Herbert and Dillon Mitchell will face arguably their toughest test of the season this week against a vaunted Washington secondary featuring multiple All-Americans.

The No. 7 Huskies rank third nationally in scoring defense — 13.7 points — thanks in large part to a starting defensive backfield of corners Jordan Miller, Byron Murphy and Myles Bryant and safeties Taylor Rapp and JoJo McIntosh, who have surrendered only 13 passing touchdowns over the last 19 games, the fewest in the country during that span.

"They're big, they're physical, they're disciplined, they're athletic, they're a complete defense and there's a reason why they lead the league in scoring defense and many other categories," Oregon Coach Mario Cristobal said. "They know their scheme well. They're very good fundamentally; they got their hands inside, they play with their pads down. A real good defense."

Washington is second in the Pac-12 and 18th nationally in pass defense — 174.7 yards — and though the unit's passes-defended stats are down slightly from last year, few opponents have been effective at moving the ball against the Huskies. The only opponents to top 300

yards passing against Washington since 2016 were Washington State and Penn State at the end of last season.

"They're as talented as anyone in the country," Herbert said. "They're a group of guys that fly around and are really well-coached and they play passionate defense. It'll be a good test."

Washington knows No. 17 Oregon (4-1, 1-1 Pac-12) will turn to Mitchell to make plays on Saturday.

Herbert is averaging 282.2 passing yards per game, with Mitchell accounting for 84 of those yards. It will come down to how they can find holes in a Huskies secondary that held Arizona State star N'Keal Harry to a career-low 4.0 yards per catch earlier this season.

Mitchell said he watched tape of how Washington defended Harry and Auburn's wide receivers this season and believes the Huskies will be the best test of Oregon's season.

"They're all good cornerbacks and safeties," Mitchell said. "They're very disciplined, I've seen that a lot. ... I'm not going to say much, but I definitely feel like there's some places where I can expose them."

Oregon offensive coordinator Marcus Arroyo said the wealth of experience in Washington's secondary is what makes the unit such a challenge and it will be up to the Ducks to create opportunities for potential mismatches and holes.

"Anything you can find schematically to give yourself an advantage we're going to do," Arroyo said. "I think anybody is smart to do that — without jeopardizing what your guys can handle. I think those guys are all good players and we (have) got to go out there and do things right."

Should Oregon succeed in moving the ball in the air consistently against Washington, which is also facing its toughest test from an opposing quarterback in Herbert this week, it goes without saying that ending drives with touchdowns is critical.

While Oregon leads the Pac-12 in scoring, it has struggled inside the red zone, where its 79.2 percent conversion rate ranks 10th in the conference and 104th nationally.

In a rivalry game and against an opponent as good as Washington, which is holding opponents to 75 percent scoring in the red zone, Oregon cannot afford to leave points on the field.

"They do a great job in the red zone," Cristobal said. "You can see it in Game 1. Auburn got down there a good chunk of times and couldn't get seven points. (They) had to settle for field goals. That stuff is always going to be emphasized and being that we only had seven (in the second half Sept. 29 against Cal) it will, of course, be emphasized even more."

PREP VOLLEYBALL ROUNDUP

Bobcats give scare to Grant Union



Ronald Bond/Observer file photo

The Union volleyball team's valiant effort against Grant Union come up short as it lost in four sets.

Observer staff

The Union Bobcats volleyball team took a set from Blue Mountain Conference-champion Grant Union and were on the cusp of pushing the Prospectors to a fifth set, but came up just short of that goal in a 25-13, 25-22, 21-25, 26-24 home loss in BMC play Tuesday.

Union shook off a rough first set to hang with Grant Union in the second set and ultimately win the third. The Bobcats held a 22-17 lead in Set 4 before the Prospectors ended the set — and match — on a 9-2 run.

"The girls truly came together and fought hard," Head Coach Lasa Baxter said. "I really thought we were taking them to Set 5."

Kaylin Nowak led the Bobcats' offense with 10 kills, and added seven digs. Kylie Marriott had five kills, and Callie Glenn dished out 27 assists. Brianna Kohr tallied 14 digs, and Autumn Daggett had three aces.

Union (11-8 overall, 5-5 BMC) hosts Weston-McEwen Thursday.

Also Tuesday TIGERS HANDLE MAC-HI

The La Grande Tigers volleyball team moved one step closer to a Greater Oregon League title with a straight-set road win against the McLoughlin Pioneers Tuesday, 25-10,

25-10, 25-21.

Claire Hardy led the offense with 18 kills. Felicity Houston paced the defense with 22 digs, and served up four aces. Riana Scott added 21 digs, and Jayce Seavert had 16 digs and five kills. Jacie Howton added 14 assists and Kenzie Williams had 12 assists.

The Tigers (13-3 overall, 4-0 GOL) host Homedale, Idaho, tonight, then host Baker Thursday, where they can secure the league title with a win.

PANTHERS EARN SWEEP

The Imbler Panthers volleyball team earned a close three-set win over the Elgin Huskies in Old Oregon League play Tuesday in Elgin, 25-19, 25-16, 26-24.

Caysie McGinness had nine kills and 14 digs to lead Imbler. Karrington Troyer recorded 19 assists, 10 digs and five aces. Aspen Smith had 14 digs and five kills, and Chloe Birkmaier added 12 digs.

Tymra Anderson led Elgin with five kills and seven digs. Kaelin Evans added four blocks and one ace.

The Panthers (11-9 overall, 7-3 OOL) visit Powder Valley Thursday in their regular-season finale, while the Huskies (5-14, 3-8) host Pine Eagle in their final match of the regular season Friday.

BRIEFLY

Imbler football wins by forfeit

The Imbler Panthers football team picked up a win without even playing, as the Sherman Huskies were forced to forfeit their game in Imbler Friday due to a lack of players, according to the Oregon School Activities Association website.

The win by forfeit moves Imbler's record to 5-2 overall, and locks the Panthers into third place in Special District 3-West at 4-2.

Imbler travels to Arlington/Condon Oct. 19.

EASTERN OREGON ATHLETICS NEWS

EOU football moves into NAIA top 25

Observer staff

The Eastern Oregon football team moved into the top 25 in the latest edition of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics coaches poll Monday — the first time the Mountaineers have been ranked since September 2017.

The Mountaineers are ranked 24th with 37 points in the poll, just ahead of Frontier Conference foe Montana Tech, which is 25th

with 33 points.

In all, five of the eight teams in the Frontier are ranked. Southern Oregon, which suffered its first loss in a 34-21 set back to Rocky Mountain, dropped to No. 7. Rocky Mountain moved up to No. 16 following the upset win over the then-No. 2 Raiders, and Montana Western is ranked 19th.

Morningside, Iowa, holds the top spots with 366 points and 15 first-place votes.

SOU and EOU meet Saturday in Ashland. **EOU MEN'S HOOP PICKED FIFTH IN CCC**

The Eastern Oregon men's basketball team was picked to finish fifth in the Cascade Collegiate Conference in a poll of the CCC's coaches, the conference announced Tuesday.

EOU, which last season went 21-8 overall and was 13-7 in the CCC, received 73 points in the poll.

College of Idaho, which won the CCC a year ago at 18-2, is the preseason favorite with 113 points and six first-place votes. Oregon Tech (113 points, three first-place votes) is a close second. Southern Oregon (99, two) and Warner Pacific (93) are also ahead of EOU in third and fourth, respectively.

The Mountaineers open the season at home Friday against Salish Kootenai College.

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