

QB worked to become a leader in the offseason

Oregon quarterback Justin Herbert has focused on developing his leadership skills and getting stronger as he prepares for his sophomore season guiding the Ducks. Oregon opens the season at home against Southern Utah. The Ducks will have a new look this fall under first-year coach Willie Taggart.

By
Anne M. Peterson
AP Sports Writer

EUGENE, Ore. (AP) — Oregon quarterback Justin Herbert had what was essentially a two-pronged approach to the offseason: Become stronger and become a leader.

Herbert put on muscle, prompting Ducks first-year coach Willie Taggart to joke that the sophomore signal-caller kept strutting around shirtless. Herbert worked on the leadership part, too, as a counselor at the Manning camp in Louisiana.

"I've seen Justin grow a lot. I mean, he's giving off a lot of confidence, especially to the other players, to show he's that guy," running back Royce Freeman said. "We're definitely following behind him and we trust him fully."

Thrust into a role as Oregon's starting quarterback as a freshman last season when graduate transfer Dakota Prukop struggled, Herbert would go on to play in nine games, throwing for 1,936 yards with 19 touchdowns.

Herbert goes into this season knowing he's the starter. The Ducks open at home on Saturday afternoon against Southern Utah.

It will be the Oregon debut for Taggart, who is looking to rebuild a team that went 4-8 overall for the Ducks' first losing season since 2004.

Taggart comes to Eugene after four years at South Florida, where he guided the Bulls from a 2-10 record his first year to a 10-2 mark last year and a spot in the Birmingham Bowl. Before that he spent three seasons at his alma mater, Western Kentucky, inheriting a winless program that he turned around with back-to-back winning seasons.

Known for being soft-spoken and shy, Herbert said he's

talked with his new head coach about what it means to be a leader.

"I think just realizing that the quarterback has to step up. The team needs to be led," Herbert said. "Coach Taggart and I have talked about how I need to step up and be more vocal for the betterment of the team. So I've put my shyness away and I've tried to come out a little more and talk."

Herbert understands that his introverted approach last season may have hindered the Ducks.

"Last year I think I didn't do a good job of being vocal or talking very much. So I think it kind of hurt us from a strategy standpoint. I didn't have the comfortability to go to the offensive linemen or the running backs or the receivers," Herbert said. "But I think just being more comfortable around them has been super helpful."

Part of his transformation was the result of the time he spent this summer at the Manning Passing Academy. Among his fellow counselors were USC's Sam Darnold and Washington's Jake Browning.

Herbert also bulked up over the summer, putting on some 15 pounds, and his arms are noticeably bigger. His new 6-foot-6 body prompted a bit of good-natured chiding from the team.

"He's gained about 15 pounds since last year, and Justin's walking outside with his shirt off now. And if you all know Justin, that wasn't him before. But he's laughing. He's hanging out with his guys," Taggart said.

Freeman joked: "We're trying to beg him, 'Just please put your shirt on.'"

Herbert, who sheepishly said his physique has "been exaggerated a little bit," is more focused on the process. The Ducks are expected to have a transition season as Taggart installs his system: Oregon was selected to finish fourth in the Pac-12 North.

Herbert believes the future is bright.

"We just have to listen to the guys who have been there. We've got multiple guys on our team who have been in a national championship and have played there. We've got coaches who've coached in big games and they know what it takes. And the players do, too," he said. "I think just listening to them and following the game plan will get us there."

School activities bring communities together

by Peter Weber,
Executive Director of the Oregon School Activities Association.

Tailgates. Pep rallies. Friday night lights. The new school year is here! And that's exciting news for student athletes and high school sports fans alike.

Research shows that being a student athlete is about a lot more than fun and games. It teaches important life lessons, too. In fact, high school athletes not only have higher grade point averages and fewer school absences than non athletes, they also develop the kind of work habits and self discipline skills that help them become more responsible and productive community members.

Attending high school sporting events teaches important life lessons, too.

Among them, it teaches that we can live in different communities, come from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures, cheer for different teams, and still have a common bond.

That's why attending the activities hosted by your high school this fall is so important. It's not only an opportunity to cheer for your hometown team, it is also an opportunity to celebrate our commonality. And that's something our country needs right now.

The bond we share is mutually supporting the teenagers in our respective communities. We applaud their persistence, tenacity, preparation and hard work, regardless of the color of the uniform they wear. We acknowledge that education based, high school sports are enhancing their lives, and ours, in ways that few other activities could. And we agree that, regardless of what side of the field we sit on, attending a high school sporting event is an uplifting, enriching, family friendly experience for all of us.

Many of the high schools in our state lie at the heart of the communities they serve. They not only are educating our next generation of leaders, they also are a place where we congregate, where people from every corner of town and all walks of life come together as one. And at no time is this unity more evident than during a high school athletic event.

This is the beginning of a new school year. Opportunities abound in the classroom and outside it. Let's make the most of them by attending as many athletic events at the high school in our community as possible.

Turn on the lights, and let the games begin!

Colorado St opens new stadium by beating Oregon St 58-27

By
Pat Graham
AP Sports Writer

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP) — The opening of a new stadium left quarterback Nick Stevens momentarily breathless.

A big hit to the stomach early in the game from a linebacker will do that. He quickly got his second wind to help Colorado State make quite a first impression.

Stevens threw three touchdown passes, linebacker Tre Thomas scored on a 44-yard interception return to lead a Colorado State defense that forced five turnovers and the Rams launched their new on-campus stadium with a 58-27 win over Oregon State on a steamy Saturday.

Colorado State moved into its new digs after nearly five decades of playing down the

road at Hughes Stadium. A raucous 37,583 fans showed up to catch a glimpse of the \$220-million facility.

"I just told the guys in there — there's only one shot at opening a new stadium," said Rams coach Mike Bobo, who was hoisted onto his players' shoulders in the locker room after the game. "There's going to be one memory. It was a good one for Colorado State people."

Stevens did his part to make sure it was a successful unveiling by throwing for 334 yards — his third career 300-yard game. A hit in the first quarter, though, left him shaken up and gasping for air.

"It felt like I wasn't going to be able to breathe for another couple hours," Stevens cracked. "Usually, a hit like that takes some of the breath out of you. But it took every ounce of breath I ever breathed. I had to focus on

breathing after that. I got over it."

The Beavers fumbled twice and threw three interceptions on the way to losing their 14th straight road game.

Oregon State's Jake Luton finished 27 of 47 for 304 yards and two scores. He also threw three interceptions, including the game-changer in the third quarter. Thomas grabbed a tipped pass out of the air and raced 44 yards to make it 34-20.

"We got beat badly — badly," Oregon State coach Gary Andersen said. "There are a lot of concerns when you get beat like that. It's uncharted waters for me."

But Colorado State ended up earning the biggest first of all in its new facility — a win.

"Everyone is going to pat us on the back now," Bobo said. "Everybody is going to tell us how great we are. Everybody is going to tell us how great that moment was. ... We've

got to be mature enough as a football team to understand how we got to this point to win this ball game — by doing the little things every day."

Bobo wasn't too pleased with Stevens attempting a jump pass near the goal line that was nearly picked off. The Rams ended up with a field goal.

"That was stupid. We've got points right there," Bobo said. "Luckily, they didn't catch it. That's not a smart decision. He's not Brett Favre."

OREGON STATE: Hosts Portland State next Saturday. The Beavers are 4-0 all-time against the Vikings.

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