

OREGON STATE PREVIEW

Beavers to rebuild from bottom up

In one respect, the Oregon State football program bottomed out in 1980.

The Beavers lost all 11 games, the first time in the school's history that its football team failed to win at least one game. The 0-11 mark stretched OSU's losing streak to 14 games. You have to go all the way back to Oct. 27, 1979, to find an Oregon State victory. The Beavers have also dropped 23 of their last 24.

But 1980 produced an encouraging note, the

emergence of Joe Avezzano as head coach. Avezzano stepped in, took a look at the wreckage of a program left by four years of Craig Fertig and didn't make any promises.

"The talent necessary to compete at the level of the Pac-10 is not here," he bluntly said at the time. The Beavers' winless season bore out that assessment.

Now, a year later, Avezzano is still a good deal less than optimistic about any im-

mediate turnaround in the fortunes of the Orange and Black.

"We've still got a lot of work to do," he says. "There are all kinds of different aspects of this program that still have to be restructured. We spent last year just trying to pull those pieces together. We don't pretend to have all the elements secured that we need to lay any kind of foundation for the program. We're certainly a lot further along than we

were last year. Right now we're ready to embark on what is really our first year."

That voyage could be another rocky one for the Beavers. Their schedule takes them on the road against Louisiana State, Oklahoma, Washington and Minnesota, while USC and Stanford will be paying calls on Parker Stadium this fall. In fact, going in, the Beavers' best chance at a win appears to be their opener at home against Fresno State.

Avezzano calls the schedule "one of the 10 toughest in the nation," but says he's not worried about it. That's not too surprising. Avezzano has enough to worry about with his own team.

Two spots that shouldn't concern him are quarterback and kicker.

Back to call signals for the Beavers is Ed Singler, who took over the starting job against Washington last season. He finished the season with a .589 completion percentage on 180 pass attempts and threw for three touchdowns. Running out of the OSU veer, he gained 375 yards rushing, though that figure was reduced by the 267 he was sacked for.

"Singler is considerably improved over last year and this season will show the results of that improvement," Avezzano says.

Chris Mangold will handle the placekicking chores. The junior was perfect on what extra-point chances he got last year — the Beavers scored only 14 touchdowns — and hit four of 12 field goal attempts, including three of five inside 40 yards.

At the other skill positions, the Beavers are going primarily with youth and hoping for the best, although there are a few experienced hands still around.

The main man in the backfield this season looks to be sophomore Randy Holmes. As a freshman, Holmes gained 379 yards in 1980 and was OSU's second-leading rusher behind the graduated Tony Robinson. He can play either fullback or tailback, but at 5-9 and 179 pounds he seems best suited for the latter spot.

At fullback, Avezzano is encouraged by the presence of Tony Green. Avezzano recruited him last year out of Richmond, Calif., and though he got zero playing time for OSU in 1980, the sophomore is considered to be the leading candidate for the starting slot. He gained 1,500 yards as a high school senior, averaging 8.1 yards per carry.

If Green gives OSU the blues, sophomores Bob Johnson and Bryce Oglesby can step in. Both have size and both are lettermen.

It remains to be seen whether tailback Daryl Minor can be a major factor in the OSU offense. Minor gained 202 yards rushing in the 1980 spring game, then missed the entire season with a hairline fracture of back vertebrae. He also underwent knee surgery. If Minor can't cut it for the Beavers, Avezzano also has sophomores Mike Cagle and Jimmy Love plus a bunch of freshmen.

At the wide receiver spots, Avezzano is looking for big things from Victor Simmons, a three-year letterman who was moved outside last season. He responded with 37 receptions for 500 yards and two touchdowns and was seventh in the Pac-10 in pass receiving.

The other starting pass-catcher will be Tim Sim, an ex-running back who could easily qualify for hard-luck player of the decade. After a promising freshman season, Sim missed 1979 with a knee injury and all but three games of 1980 with hepatitis.

"Simmons will give us the big-play man we didn't have last year," Avezzano says. "And Sim gives us a much better quality receiver at the other spot than we had last year."

Ron Vogel and Chris Smith provide the team with a pair of experienced tight ends

A new year, a new lesson for Hettum

Last year's lesson was to learn to compete. This year's goal is to win.

And so it's taught to Joe Avezzano disciples such as Mark Hettum, the Oregon State senior cornerback.

For the first time in a long time at OSU, people are thinking about winning," says Hettum. "It sounds funny, but before Avezzano came, no even thought about winning before a game."

Football is a serious matter once again in Beaver country, where the troops were winless in 11 tries last year. And for Hettum, the former Centennial High star, the fire inside is building.

He has worked out six days a week this summer, either running or lifting weights. Those workouts came after a day of work at Weyerhaeuser in Longview, where he commutes daily from his Portland residence.

Hettum quit his job a week before practice began to get ready. He can recite the Beaver schedule, home and away, frontward and backward.

This boy's got football on his mind.

"When we get back (to practice), they are really going to stick it to us. So you got to be in good shape or they will run you into the ground," Hettum says.

Hettum has one main incentive. "It's my last year in football. Being all-league doesn't matter that much to me. I want to have my best season."

"Football has been a good experience for me and I don't want it to end on a sour note."

He labeled his performance last season, his first as a starter, "consistent. But I can't be satisfied. My biggest problem is the run."

He admits a tendency to get overcautious about a runner getting by him instead of hitting the runner with full impact, without hesitation.

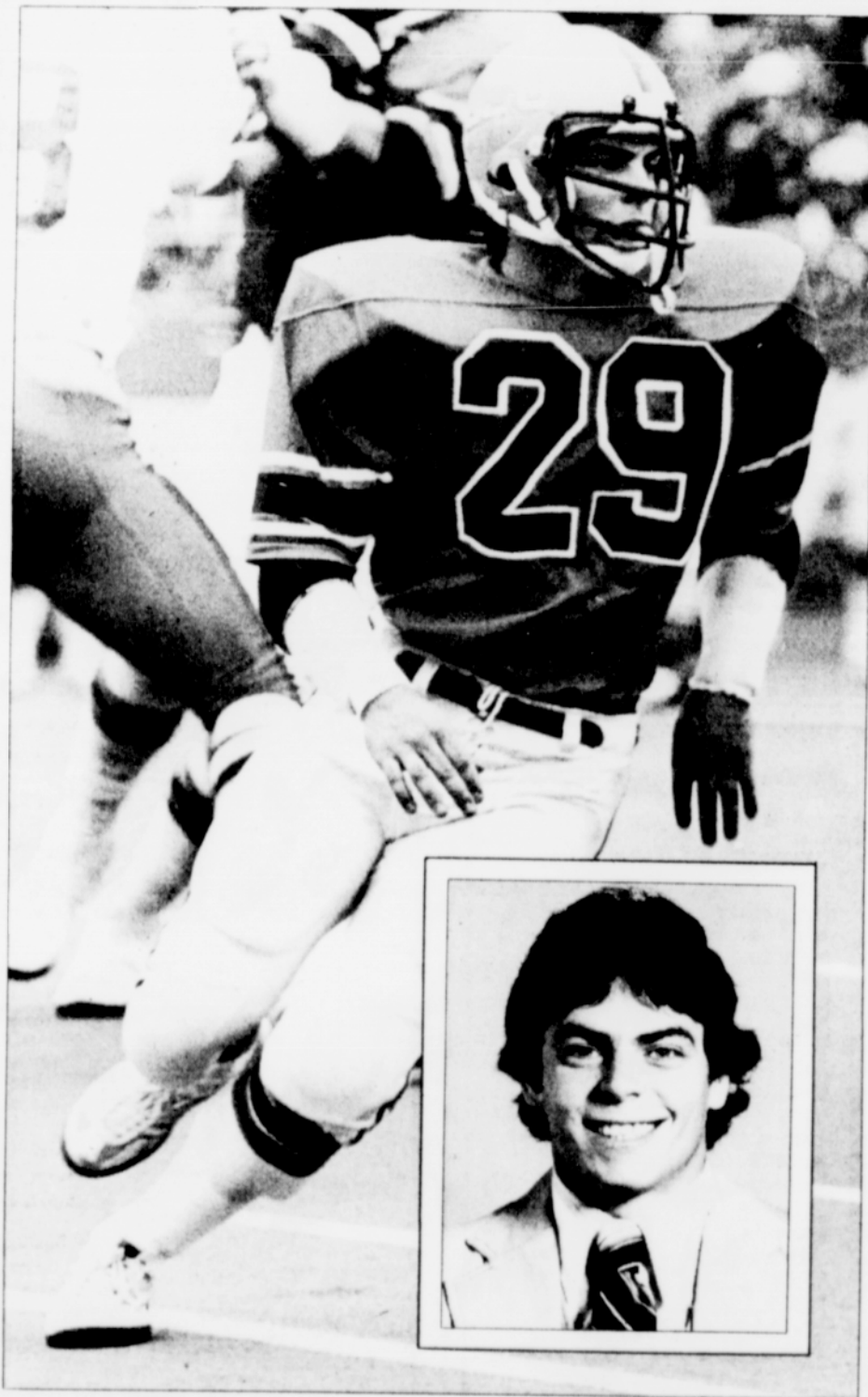
Still, as Hettum rolls into his senior year, he can look back and say he's come a long way. A walk-on as a freshman, he soon earned a scholarship and is now a key defender in the Beaver secondary.

He attributes his improvement to his awareness of the game. "I was more aware of what was going on, reading the plays, as the season went on."

"One thing the coaches have been working on is to make us understand not only the plays but why we do the plays. I feel it coming around. Opening game last year, everything was like a blur. I was a scared kid."

"I learned from films, too. But talent-wise, I don't feel I changed that much last season. I don't think anyone does during a season."

For most seniors who have a starting spot secured, the summer before their final collegiate year is a time to dream about the NFL draft, pro scouts and million-dollar contracts.



Safety Mark Hettum hopes Beavers will tackle some wins this season.

Not for Hettum. For someone who speaks so confidently of himself and his team, Hettum is modest when evaluating his chances of getting drafted.

"I've seen a lot of freshmen say 'Yeah, I'm gonna play pro, make a million dollars,'" he says. "It's so unrealistic. They're just hoping. I'm realistic. I don't think I'm big enough (5-8) or fast enough. In the pros, it's a lot of work and a 100-percent injury rate. I've never planned on making it in pro football. There are other goals I want to follow."

A student, who carries a 3.5 grade point

average, Hettum plans a career in engineering. "As you get older, you get wiser," he says. "I've seen a lot of good players at Oregon State that went out and never even made the cut (in pro camps). Maybe I use my ability as an excuse, but I don't know if playing pro football would be that fun. In the pros, they walk back to the huddle — that's not my idea of football."

Neither is an 0-11 season, and Hettum hopes he can help change that this year.

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