

by Jerry Thompson

Final Scores Don't Tell the Whole Story

Last Saturday very few Duck fans walked out of Autzen after the win over Nevada with a sense of satisfaction. There were a lot of big plays which were entertaining, but many left with the uneasy feeling that those big plays might be a lot harder to come by in future as the competition improves. Much like last week's game against Mississippi State, instead of delivering a knockout punch to what appeared to be an inferior foe, the opponent gained new life and threatened to tie the score late in the game. In fact the Wolfpack trailed by just 8 points with 9:48 left in the game and had the momentum. In both games the Ducks managed to mount a drive, eat up some clock and the defense came up with some key stops to gain the victory. What is disconcerting is the second half ineptness of the offense, a pattern from last year that seemed to be solved against MSU, but which reared its ugly head again. In week 1 the offense did move the ball consistently and scored 2 touchdowns in the second half. Against Nevada the offense only gained 100 yards in the entire second half and scored no points. Keith Lewis' interception for a TD and a missed extra point is all that separated the Wolfpack and the Ducks at the end.

The Nevada offensive and defensive lines, especially in the second half, played the Ducks on equal terms. The difference in the game was Oregon's big plays, namely the speed of Samie Parker in the first half. After the game one couldn't help but wonder whether Nevada was that good or whether Oregon was that weak. The Duck defense for the most part played well. The offense needs to be able to run the ball consistently and 10 for 24 for only 154 from the starting quarterback (Clemens) is not going to beat anyone the rest of the year.

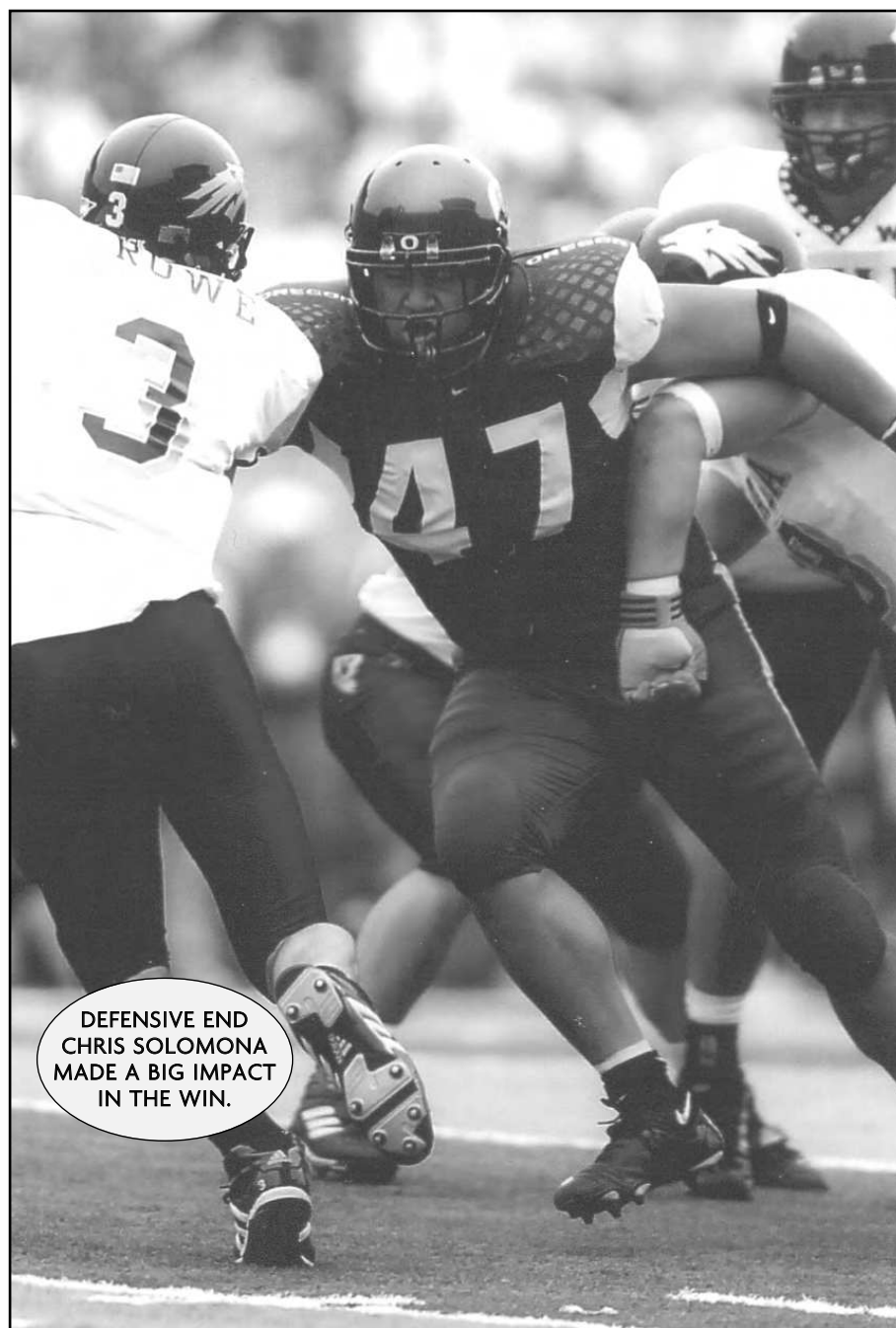
The Good

1. The punting of freshman Paul Martinez. He averaged 38.6 yards on 10 punts and four were downed inside the Nevada 10.

2. The use of "crossing patterns" in the first half. We saw almost none of that last year.

3. The "no huddle" series. It was refreshing to see the offense try something a little creative and step up the intensity and sense of urgency.

4. Samie Parker's complete game: He caught 7 passes for 162 yards, ran for 50 yards on a reverse, downed a key punt at the Nevada 3 with 4:22 left in the game, and also made



DEFENSIVE END
CHRIS SOLOMONA
MADE A BIG IMPACT
IN THE WIN.

Ducks Illustrated photo courtesy: John Stroops

a good block to enable Kellen Clemens to gain an important first down.

5. Kenny Washington's big statement that he is healthy and is a back that can be counted on, as he displayed good speed, vision, and moves. His first carry of the season was a difficult one as he was lined up in the endzone with the ball at the Oregon 3: "I was thinking punch it, go! I knew what hole to go through and if it wasn't there I was going to try to make one. My main concern was holding on to the ball because that's the wrong place to lose it. At the two yard line I wouldn't look too good." Kenny gained 4 yards and moments later showed off his moves running for 22 more.

6. Defensive Ends: Devan Long and Chris Solomon made some impact plays for the Ducks. Long had two sacks and Solomon added a sack as well as a big deflection of Andy Heiser's pass that resulted in Keith Lewis' touchdown. Continued strong play of the defensive ends will allow the Ducks to move Igor Olshansky to tackle when Quinn Dorsey returns for the Washington State game.

7. The uniforms: The green color is great and the yellow trim works pretty well.

8. Overall the defense played better and caused some key turnovers: Steven Moore and Lewis' INTs.

The Bad

1. Nevada's two best cornerbacks

were out for this game. Still the Oregon passing game struggled with only 13 completions by only three players.

2. Neither the QB option play nor the screen worked and no tight end caught any passes.

3. It can't be a secret to anyone that when the Ducks line up four receivers that means only one thing: they are going to run the ball. It would be nice to see them actually throw the ball out of that formation.

The Ugly

Those punt and kickoff return penalties. Are the referees calling things differently this year? How difficult is it to tell yourself to not hold and to stop pushing in the back? I thought that was going to be cleaned up this week, but it wasn't. On a punt or kickoff a penalty is now the norm rather than the exception.

This Week's Game

Although Oregon beat Nevada 31-23 and Arizona lost to LSU 59-13, don't think for a minute that the next game will be a cakewalk. The first Pac-10 game will be an emotional one for Arizona. One Wildcat player even said the Wildcats "hate Oregon". The Ducks will need to step up their intensity as they will be playing in front of a crowd that kept cheering on the Wildcats whenever they did something good despite being blown out by the Tigers. The defense must shut down Arizona early as the last two years Arizona got off to good starts scoring 14 points in the first 17 minutes of each game. Oregon must also put them away as LSU did by continuing to pass the ball despite a lead of over 30 points. This game is a must win for the Ducks to have a winning season. With Michigan and a solid Washington State team ahead, the margin of error is slim and Arizona is not a team they can afford to let hang around as they allowed Mississippi State and Nevada to do. Last week's theme for the Ducks in practice was "hustle, focus, and finish." It will need to be repeated this week too. **O**

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