



KEN WOODY
Feature Writer
DUCKS ILLUSTRATED

Chalk Talk/Ducks

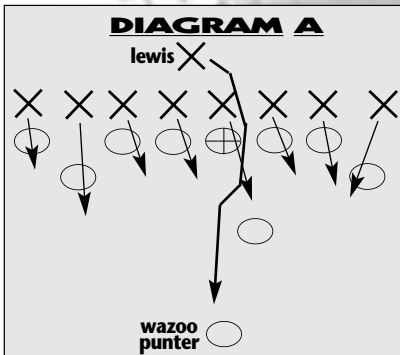
UO "Deducked" as Wazzu Romps

In a game that was not as close as the final score indicated, Oregon's tenth-ranked Ducks did not show up for their first conference game against the defending Pac-10 champion Washington State Cougars and experienced a 55-16 reality check before a sun-baked crowd at Autzen Stadium. As the shell shocked Ducks staggered back to the safety of their \$3 million dollar locker room, they were, no doubt,



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The few "real" Duck fans stayed until the bitter end.



Keith Lewis, kick blocker extraordinaire brought some life to the Autzen crowd with a block of a Cougar punt in the first quarter to get the Ducks to 17-2. Unfortunately for the Ducks, the ball went out of the back of the end zone for a two point safety before it could be recovered in the end zone for a touchdown. The play was incorporated into the Cougar game plan by Special Teams Coach Robin Ross who brought the scheme out of his old Oakland Raider playbook. Ross, who coached linebackers for the Raiders, said the punt block worked to perfection against the Denver Broncos. Looking at the replay, Lewis lined up non-chalantly off the line of scrimmage until the snap of the ball. Then he hit the left center-guard gap behind another rusher who started at the line of scrimmage. The first rusher got through, and drew the attention and block of the personal protector, who did not see Lewis coming in behind him. Once through the line, Lewis veered to his right slightly and used his natural ability to get to the punter where he blocked the ball off his foot for the safety.

wondering how things could have turned south in only a week. From the cover of Sports Illustrated to the inside cover of the nickel news in only seven days. It was like answering a knock at your front door and finding the ugly specter of defeat that predominated the last half of the Ducks' schedule last year: crummy offense, turnovers, poor special team play, and shoddy defense — the total package. For those fans who thought the victory over Michigan had erased the memories of last year, Saturday's debacle brought back the tremors and nightmares that made life miserable in the Valley of the Duck in 2002. Truly, it was difficult to imagine that the Oregon players struggling with WSU were the same warriors who performed so efficiently, and valiantly, against the third-ranked Wolverines seven days earlier.

Offensively, Oregon showed up flat and got worse. Can you imagine a game outside of KidSports that has seven interceptions? Oh, and there were two lost fumbles as well. It's a good thing there is no statistic for dropped touchdown passes, because it would have been three, but what was worse, was that the drops killed

Oregon's chances of staying in the game and giving their crowd something to cheer about. Two punts were blocked by the Cougs, one for a touchdown, perhaps aided by a last minute substitution on the punt protection team because of an injury on Wednesday to Nate LiaBraaten. Defensively, the Cougs had their way with the Duck secondary, plundering them deep several times, including five completions of more than 30 yards. Their front four outplayed the Oregon offensive line in the first half, and a combination of Cougar blitzes never allowed Duck quarterbacks Kellen Clemens and Jason Fife time or room to find their receivers on a consistent basis. When they were able to get the ball off, the ball was generally dropped,

including several by Oregon's big play receiver Samie Parker.

Two offensive non-plays sealed Oregon's doom in the first half. The first, was a fumble by Demetrius Williams after a 47-yard completion from Jason Fife with WSU leading 17-2. An Oregon score was imminent, and the psychological letdown from the fumble was felt throughout the stadium. Parker actually had a touchdown pass bounce off his face mask, one of four drops he had during the day for the other big deflation of the first half. Oregon would never recover and fans would be heading for the parking lot with seven minutes still left in the third quarter. So what do you make of all this? It was hard to believe the same kids playing Saturday were the ones playing lights out the previous week against a very good football team.

"We've got to regroup, this is a gut check," said Special Teams coach Robin Ross after the game. Answering questions about a team letdown from the emotional win over Michigan, Head Coach Mike Bellotti said, "We had a good week of practice, not a great week, but a good week. I don't know if you can tell how good or bad we are or Washington State is by the way we played today. We're going to chose about twenty plays of today's game to review and get ready for Utah," he said, indicating the coaches would begin work on this week's opponent right after the game Saturday. Oregon plays the Utes in Salt Lake on Friday night, which gives them one less day than normal to get ready for the televised game. Utah's game with Colorado State a 28-21 win, was a night game Saturday, which gives them even less time to prepare. **O**

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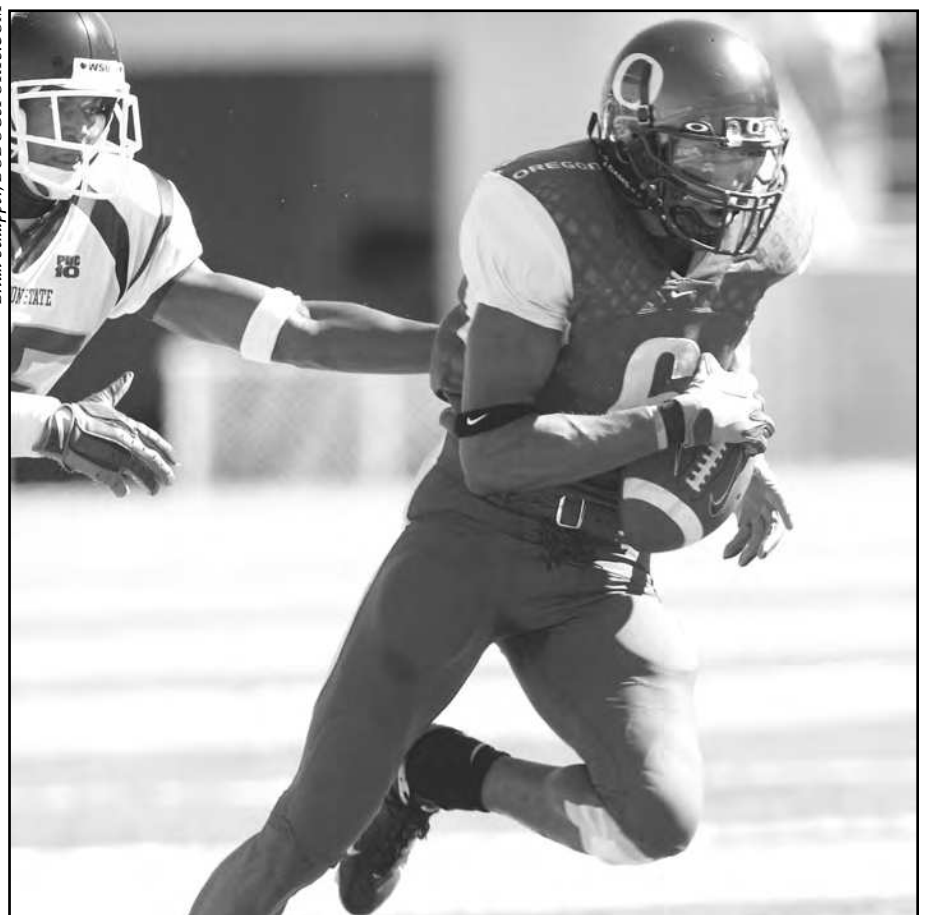
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Williams' fumble stopped the little first quarter momentum the Ducks had.