

OTHER VIEWS

DraftKings, FanDuel wrong for now, but on right side

Say goodbye to all those annoying commercials. Forget about the promise of winning millions of dollars.

The courts are sure to find what the rest of us already know.

Daily fantasy games are no different than putting down a bet at the horse track or handing over a few bucks to your neighborhood bookie.

Once we get past the obvious — yep, FanDuel and DraftKings are indeed sports gambling, which is against the law in most places — we can move on to the more important issue: should this sort of wagering be legalized?

Frankly, it's long overdue. People love to bet.

Always have, always will. Might as well let them head down to their local gaming parlor or simply place a wager on their smartphones.

As is often the case with issues of social relevance, the NBA is leading the way. Specifically, Commissioner Adam Silver, who one year



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AP Comment

ago wrote an op-ed in The New York Times calling for a new approach to the illicit world of gambling. "Despite legal restrictions,

sports betting is widespread," Silver said then. "It is a thriving underground business that operates free from regulation or oversight. Because there are few legal options available, those who wish to bet resort to illicit bookmaking operations and shady offshore websites."

FanDuel and DraftKings brought it out into the open, allowing gamblers — call them what they are — to wager each day on a group of specific athletes, using the fantasy sports model that exploded in popularity over the past few decades.

When those two Web sites began raking in millions, and began pouring

that money back into an onslaught of television commercials during the NFL season, it was only a matter of time before someone noticed.

That someone was Eric Schneiderman, who happens to be New York's attorney general. Next week, he'll be in court arguing that FanDuel and DraftKings are running an illegal gambling operation.

It doesn't take a law degree to know he's right.

"My job is to enforce the law," Schneiderman wrote Friday in his own op-ed in the New York Daily News.

"For more than a century, New York laws have banned gambling. The few narrow exceptions that exist — which do not include sports betting — all come with strong regulation and oversight to ensure fairness and protect New Yorkers from fraud."

Rightfully, he scoffed at the companies' argument that they're not bound by gambling regulations because they are games of "skill."

There is no question the most

skillful players probably have the best chance of winning, but that applies to any form of wagering.

Information always improves the odds, whether it's reading the countless books on the best ways to play blackjack, to having an inside tip on a horse's injury before the Kentucky Derby, to coming up with a complex set of algorithms that gives a fantasy player the best chance.

But nothing (except perhaps fixing a sporting event) guarantees a winner.

That's when it becomes gambling.

"FanDuel and DraftKings have made the argument, over and over ... that they run 'games of skill' and are therefore legal," Schneiderman went on. "This is nonsense. New York law prohibits sports wagering — betting money on a future event outside of the gambler's control — regardless of the skill involved."

OK, so that's a slam dunk for the attorney general.

But let's get back to Silver. Like Schneiderman, the NBA commish is right, too.

He notes that times have changed dramatically since 1992 when all the major leagues, the NBA included, pushed for Congress to approve the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, which generally prohibits states from legalizing sports betting (Nevada and a handful of states with licensed sports pools were exempted).

"Gambling has increasingly become a popular and accepted form of entertainment in the United States," Silver said. "Most states offer lotteries. Over half of them have legal casinos."

He correctly notes that plenty of countries around the world allow betting on professional sports, most notably England, without any major issues. For years, one of the major arguments against legalized gambling was that athletes might be swayed to throw games in exchange for a big payout. Multi-million-dollar

contracts have largely removed that risk.

Besides, as Silver points out, a legal but tightly regulated betting system would provide even more assurance that everything is on the up and up.

There are still issues to sort out, from verifying that players are old enough to wager to coming up with mechanisms to identify and help those who have a gambling addiction.

But that's for down the road.

In the short term, before the courts deliver a devastating blow, let's give thanks to FanDuel and DraftKings for being on the right side of this issue.

Even if they're on the wrong side for now.

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College Football

No. 24 Washington St sheds losing ways, earns respect

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press



Colorado Buffaloes (4-7)



#24 WSU Cougars (7-3)

• Saturday, 7:45 p.m.
• at Martin Stadium, Pullman
• TV: ESPN2

Washington State safety Taylor Taliulu remembers the lean years, when the Cougars were barely a footnote in the Pac-12 standings.

Now No. 24 Washington State (7-2, 5-2 Pac-12) is the surprise team of the league and aiming for a prestige bowl game.

"It's honestly been a roller coaster," said Taliulu, a senior whose Washington State playing career has included three losing seasons before this campaign. "Ever since my freshman year, it's like a total 360. All the hard work, I'm happy to see it paying off now."

Washington State has secured its first winning season since 2003 and is ranked for the first time since 2006, and the winning is expected to continue. The Cougars are 15-point favorites on Saturday against Colorado (4-7, 1-6) in Pullman.

Featuring the nation's top passing attack, along with an improved bend-but-don't-break defense, the Cougars have won five of their past six games, and are coming off a 31-27 last-second win at UCLA. The cardiac Cougars have won three games in the

closing seconds this year, something they couldn't pull off in the recent past.

"We're definitely special, but as a team we expected nothing else," said linebacker Peyton Pelluer. "In the forefront of our minds is to be great and bring this program some glory again."

The season began disastrously for the Cougars as they lost 27-24 to Portland State of the FCS in the opener, the first loss to a lower-division program in Washington State history. They've been rolling since, highlighted by last-second wins at Rutgers, Oregon and UCLA. They lost to No. 15 Stanford on a missed field goal in the final seconds.

"It's nice to see this team grow and get these wins we've been hungering for for so long," Pelluer said.

Star receiver Gabe Marks said the team's goal is to win its final two regular-season games, and a bowl game, to reach 10 wins.

That goal is not exactly



AP Photo/Rick Scuteri, File

In this Oct. 24, 2015, file photo, Washington State quarterback Luke Falk celebrates after defeating Arizona 45-42 during an NCAA college football game in Tucson, Ariz. Quarterback Luke Falk has thrown for 4,067 yards and a team record 35 touchdowns, breaking by one the record shared by Ryan Leaf and Connor Halliday. Washington State leads the nation with 414 yards passing per game.

consistent with coach Mike Leach's philosophy of concentrating only on

winning the next play, and letting the future take care of itself.

Leach said the Cougars need to ignore the national ranking and the buzz around the program.

The success "is a byproduct of focusing on individual plays," Leach said. "We've got to understand that what we have been doing up to this point is all that's important now."

Leach's exciting Air Raid offense has been a natural fit at Washington State, a school with a proud passing tradition.

Quarterback Luke Falk has thrown for 4,067 yards and a team-record 35 touchdowns, besting the mark of 34 shared by Ryan Leaf and Connor Halliday. Washington State leads the nation with 414 yards passing per game.

Marks, the leading receiver in the Pac-12, caught the winning touchdown in the closing seconds at UCLA. He leads a bevy of talented receivers who are carving up opposing defenses.

Leach thinks Falk, a former walk-on, should be a candidate for the Heisman Trophy this year.

When you consider who has elevated their team the most, Falk is an obvious choice, Leach said. "Everybody needs to vote for Luke Falk," he said.

The defense, which

cost Washington State numerous games last year, has improved under new defensive coordinator Alex Grinch. They still give up 30 points per game, but the Cougars average 35.

Last year, the defense didn't have a clear identity, and the players appeared apathetic, Leach said. This year's team has received clear messages from coaches, and has responded by forcing 18 turnovers, a vast improvement over last year's eight.

"They believe in Grinch completely and have bought into everything he's tried to instill in them," Marks said.

The bottom line is the Cougars are a team to be reckoned with, Pelluer said.

"We are not just irrelevant like they have seen us in the past," Pelluer said. "It's taken awhile for teams to realize, 'Yeah, these guys will punch you in the mouth.'"

While the Cougars are not eligible for the Rose Bowl because of tiebreaker scenarios, they are eyeing one of the league's top bowl games, such as the Alamo or Holiday.

Marks said they have earned that much.

"People are not going to give us respect until they absolutely have to," Marks said. "And now they have to."

Adams gets his shot at Trojans

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press



#22 USC Trojans (7-3)



#23 Oregon Ducks (7-3)

• Saturday, 12:30 p.m.
• at Autzen Stadium, Eugene
• TV: ESPN

EUGENE — Vernon Adams Jr. was a big USC fan growing up.

Oregon's quarterback is a native of Pasadena, and like many kids who grew up in Southern California, he was dazzled by the likes of Matt Leinart and the Trojans of a decade ago.

"I used to go to all the home games," he said. "It was an honor seeing those guys play, seeing how they got it done."

Adams even has a tattoo that says "SC" with interlocking letters, similar to the Trojans' logo — although now that he's a Duck he maintains it's an homage to his Southern California home, not the school.

Vernon will get a chance to face the team he once idolized on Saturday when the No. 23 Ducks (7-3, 5-2 Pac-12) host the No. 22 Trojans (7-3, 5-2) with conference championship implications for both teams.

Adams, who played three seasons at Eastern Washington before joining the Ducks, has been coming into his own since returning from a finger injury that had hampered him since the opener.

Last weekend in Oregon's 38-36 victory at Stanford, Adams threw for 205 yards and two touchdowns. In each of the two prior games, he'd thrown for 300 or more

yards and four touchdowns.

A season out from an appearance in the national championship, Oregon has struggled with losses to Michigan State, Utah and Washington State. But the Ducks have won four straight and popped back into the national rankings.

Adams is leading the rebound. But as senior transfer, he'll have only one shot at the Trojans.

"Our energy is high and I'm trying to keep the guys up and positive," he said. "We have 11 more practices in the regular season, these are my last two home games of my college career so I'm definitely excited and having fun and keeping the energy high."

Oh, and for the record, Adams patterned his game more off of Reggie Bush than Leinart.

Some other things to consider when the Ducks host the Trojans:

IT'S COMPLICATED: So about those Pac-12 championship game scenarios for both teams? Oregon must beat USC and Oregon State in the Civil War, but the Ducks also

need Cal to defeat Stanford in the annual Big Game on Saturday.

USC controls its own destiny in the Pac-12 South. If the Trojans — who hold the tiebreaker over Utah — win out against Oregon and in the rivalry game against UCLA, they'll go to the league championship.

HURTING: It's been a tough week for the Trojans, who lost their starting inside linebackers, freshman Cameron Smith and senior Lamar Dawson, to season-ending injuries. Smith, who led the Trojans with 78 tackles and also had three interceptions, tore ligaments in his knee in last weekend's victory over Colorado. Dawson has a shoulder injury. Interim coach Clay Helton said the Trojans expect to use four inside linebackers against the Ducks, but wouldn't reveal details.

JUJU HAS THE MOJO: USC sophomore receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster was named one of 10 semifinalists for the Biletnikoff Award this week. He's certainly got an impressive resume with 63 catches for 1,160 yards and 10 touchdowns.

POLYNESIAN PRIDE: Oregon defensive lineman DeForest Buckner as well as USC linebacker Su'a Cravens and Smith-Schuster were all announced as finalists for the Polynesian Hall of Fame's College Player of the Year Award.

Mitchell will play against Huskies

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press



Washington Huskies (4-6)



Oregon St. Beavers (2-8)

• Saturday, 3 p.m.
• at Reser Stadium, Corvallis
• TV: PACN

CORVALLIS — Oregon State's Nick Mitchell was listed as probable this weekend. That's good news for the Beavers, who were short on quarterbacks heading into Saturday's game at home against Washington.

The Beavers (2-8, 0-7 Pac-12) remain without freshman Seth Collins, who showed promise earlier this season but tweaked his knee running backward in practice last month. This week, coach Gary Andersen said the Beavers had shut Collins down for the season.

"It has to do with an injury, period. I've had some people that have had a question out there. That is it. End of story, exclamation point," Andersen said. "So he'll be back ready to go in January, January 4th he'll be ready to roll."

There were concerns about Mitchell after he was knocked out of last weekend's 54-24 loss at Cal by a late hit.

Mitchell's possible absence left the Beavers with just one healthy option at quarterback, Marcus McMaryion, who was Collins' backup earlier in the season until Mitchell leaptfrogged him on the depth chart.

Offensive coordinator Dave Baldwin revealed this week that junior tight end

Brent VanderVeen likely would have been the backup if Mitchell was unable to go. VanderVeen had taken some snaps in practice.

Mitchell has thrown for 571 yards, three touchdowns and four interceptions in four games. He faces a challenge in the Huskies, who top the conference in scoring defense and are second in total defense.

Andersen praised Washington's defense as technically and fundamentally sound, as well as athletic.

"And then they're a smart defense. Their goal is to line up and pre-snap with some confusion, but not to confuse themselves," Andersen said. "That's the sign of a defense that can hold some things in their head mentally and take it from practice and then apply it onto the football field."

The Beavers haven't gone winless in Pac-12 play since 1997. But time is running short to get a conference win, with just Washington (4-6, 2-5) and No. 23 Oregon left on the schedule.

WHAT'S AT STAKE:

Washington could still sneak into the postseason with victories over Oregon State and No. 24 Washington State in the Apple Cup next week.

"We're down to two big weeks and we're not even really talking about it in terms of two big weeks," Washington coach Chris Petersen said. "It's one big week for us to continue to play at a high level on defense and take the next step on offense. Really that's what we're talking about."

Petersen, by the way, has never coached a team that hasn't gone to a bowl.

ABOUT THAT BOWL (POSSIBLE) BERTH: The Pac-12 has contracts with seven bowl games, and already eight teams are bowl eligible. So if the Huskies make it, they might be looking at an at-large bid. And, although it's a total longshot, there are enough bowls this season that it's possible a five-win team could make the field. Two new bowl games were added this season, meaning that 80 eligible teams are needed.

HISTORY: Saturday's game will be the 100th meeting between the two teams. Washington holds a 61-34-4 advantage in the series, and is riding a three-game winning streak.

The last time the Huskies visited Corvallis was in 2013 and they won 69-27, putting up the most points ever allowed by the Beavers.