

Oregon's Brenner looks to bounce back

By RYAN THORBURN
Register-Guard

The last thing Doug Brenner wanted was to be the center of attention.

After replacing injured senior Matt Hegarty, Oregon's backup center struggled with low snaps during the Alamo Bowl.

The botched exchanges between Brenner and quarterback Jeff Lockie, who was also called on off the bench when Vernon Adams Jr.'s helmet was taken from him after a dangerous hit, contributed to the Ducks' 47-41 triple-overtime loss to TCU.

The historic collapse — Oregon led 31-0 at halftime before allowing the Horned Frogs to match the largest comeback in FBS bowl history — led to a disturbing backlash on social media.

Some of the notifications on Brenner's Twitter timeline included "you are an embarrassment to the program!" and "transfer you bum" and "please die asap."

While TCU's players were celebrating in the confetti in the Alamodome, Brenner and Lockie stood outside the stunned Oregon locker room and answered tough questions.

"The whole locker room just feels sick to our stomach right now, especially me," Brenner said. "I'm not proud of the way I played tonight."

Over the past few weeks, Brenner has received a lot of support from the Ducks inside the Hatfield-Dowlin Complex and



Chris Poulsen photo courtesy of University of Oregon Athletics
In this October 17, 2015, file photo, Oregon's Doug Brenner (57) celebrates a 26-20 win over Washington in Seattle. Brenner has taken a lot of heat from a passionate fan base following Oregon's second-half collapse in a 47-41 triple overtime loss to TCU in the Alamo Bowl. Brenner entered the game as an injury replacement at center.

even at Matthew Knight Arena, where he was receiving hugs from members of the Oregon women's basketball team after a recent game.

"He's doing fine," said Liz Brenner, Doug's older sister, who is finishing her brilliant multi-sport career on the hardwood. "He's got great teammates around him and our family is right there for him."

"We're just trying to get back to normal life. He has been working out hard with his football team and he's just excited for what's coming next."

Steve Greatwood said there will be a lot more chapters for Brenner to write with the Ducks. The longtime offensive line

coach plans to get the junior-to-be plenty of practice time at the guard positions this spring.

And also at center.

"Doug has played a lot of good football for us, and I believe in him," Greatwood said. "I expect him to bounce back and I've told him that. Doug is the kind of guy that is going to take full responsibility. He was upset."

"But no one will work harder than Doug Brenner. I'm excited to get to work with him."

Greatwood noted that Brenner actually replaced Hegarty in the first quarter when the score was 21-0.

There was no cause for concern about Brenner's snaps at halftime because they were on the

mark as Adams led a touchdown drive and Lockie led a field-goal drive before the intermission.

"I liken it to a round of golf when on the front nine, all your shots are finding the fairway and then on the back nine, you can't get off the tee at all," Greatwood said. "I don't know if it was tempo or he got off rhythm or what."

Brenner didn't know what happened either, he said after the game. His nightmarish evening included about a dozen bad snaps.

On third-and-2 in the third overtime, Lockie was sacked after bending down for a low snap. His desperation pass on the ensuing fourth down was incomplete, sending Oregon into an offseason of soul searching.

"I have no idea what was going on," Brenner said. "It was just a weird thing. My snaps are usually perfect."

Liz Brenner has experienced the highs and lows of competition in volleyball, softball, track and field and basketball at Oregon. She said watching her brother go through adversity was more difficult than facing it herself.

"Obviously I love my brother. He's my best friend. I have a lot of love for him, so I want to see him succeed in anything that he does," she said. "He's a really tough kid. I think through sports, you've got to know that you're not going to play your best on every single night. That happens. That happens to everyone."

"So you've just got to be able to be tough and look forward to what's coming next."

Portland State mourns death of player

Linebacker AJ Schlatter went from walk-on to starter

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Portland State is mourning the sudden death of a freshman linebacker.

AJ Schlatter died Sunday night, the school said. James Schlatter said in a Facebook tribute to his 20-year-old son that the death came after a tonsillectomy Friday.

Schlatter, a redshirt freshman, was a walk-on who became a starter and helped Portland State make the FCS playoffs. The Vikings were ranked No. 10 in the final FCS poll, finishing 9-3 in a six-game improvement from 2014.

"We lost a diamond that will never be replaced," coach Bruce Barnum said in a statement Monday. "He was the definition of what we are about at PSU."

Schlatter finished fourth on the team with 62 tackles. He was honored as the Big Sky's Defensive Player of the Week for his play in a 34-31 victory over Eastern Washington late in the season. He had 12 tackles, two sacks a forced fumble and an interception.

"He was such an inspiration to me and I was and am so PROUD to be his father. In his 20+ years he became a greater man than I could ever dream of becoming!" James Schlatter, an assistant coach for the Vikings during the 1980s, posted to Facebook.

AJ Schlatter's mother, Terri Jo, played volleyball for the Vikings and was also an assistant coach of the team in the 1990s.

Schlatter was a standout at Canby (Oregon) High School before joining Portland State. He redshirted his first year and earned a scholarship last fall.

Former coach Nigel Burton also lent his condolences to the Schlatter family.

"AJ was like a son and brother to so many in the Portland State football family," Burton wrote in a post to Instagram. "I hurt especially for Mr. Schlatter. You didn't fail. You succeeded more than you know. You raised a son that so many people admired and whose hearts AJ touched in such a short time on this Earth. We should all be so lucky."

Portland State said funeral arrangements were pending.

SEAHAWKS: Irvin says he wants to return, but understands business

Continued from 1B

tions are on the defensive side, where they could end up trying to fill three or four starting spots.

Seattle had the best run defense in the NFL this season, giving up 81.5 yards per game on the ground. Two key parts of that success were defensive tackles Brandon Mebane and Ahtyba Rubin, both of whom are unrestricted free agents. Carroll raved about both players throughout the season, but money will ultimately determine whether either returns.

Mebane just turned 31 and

made \$5.5 million in base salary this season. Rubin, in his first year with Seattle, made \$1.35 million in base salary and would appear in line for a raise.

Seattle must also decide what to do with outside linebacker Bruce Irvin after declining to pick up his fifth-year option last spring. Irvin has gone from being strictly a pass rusher as a rookie in 2012 to a versatile linebacker with the ability to rush off the edge and also play on the line of scrimmage and help in the run game.

Irvin said that in his exit conversations with Carroll and general

manager John Schneider he was asked if he'd take less money to return. That's a possibility in theory, but the reality is that this may be Irvin's best shot at a big contract.

"I want to be here. That's as simple as it is," Irvin said. "I understand the business side of it, but if I happen to be somewhere else I will always have a genuine appreciation for (Schneider) and (Carroll) for sticking their neck out there and taking me when everybody said I was a reach and had a lot of baggage."

Seattle's other defensive decision is at cornerback opposite Sherman

and whether Jeremy Lane returns. The team can move forward with DeShawn Shead or the Seahawks can look elsewhere. Seattle has shown it prefers cornerbacks who have come up in its system like Lane and Shead. The most recent example of that was the midseason release of veteran Cary Williams.

Lane is an unrestricted free agent while Shead is an exclusive rights free agent, which all but assures his return.

"I'd like to think our guys, because they know our system," Carroll said, "they've been well-schooled."

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