

College Football

# Washington's Dante Pettis realizing his potential

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Throughout his first two years at Washington, Dante Pettis was regularly regarded as a player with the potential to be great.

At times the Huskies would be teased by what Pettis might become. Then the wide receiver would disappear for long stretches and remain invisible while standing on the field.

"I think maybe it was a little bit of confidence," Washington quarterback Jake Browning said. "I think he's done a good job. Last year people would get kind of physical with him and he was kind of having to work to get off that. Now I think the confidence part, going into his third year of playing — he played a lot as a freshman and then last year as a sophomore — you know just taking that next step."

That next step has come for Pettis this season as he has grown into an invaluable part of Washington's offense and one of the reasons the Huskies find themselves in the Peach Bowl opposite top-ranked Alabama. While teammate John Ross has gotten plenty of headlines for finding the end zone 19 total times this season, Pettis isn't far behind with 14 touchdown receptions and perhaps the biggest special teams play of the year when he returned a



In this Nov. 25 photo, Washington wide receiver Dante Pettis makes a catch in front of Washington State linebacker Isaac Dotson in Pullman, Wash.

AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File

punt 58 yards for a touchdown in the fourth quarter to give Washington a 31-24 win at Utah.

"I knew that (my) numbers would increase," Pettis said. "I wasn't sure by how much."

Pettis has regularly been praised as one of the most improved offensive players from the end of the 2015 season along with running back Lavon Coleman. Pettis said that bump in productivity and success

came from fully buying into coach Chris Petersen's program.

"Coming to workouts, coming to practice every day fully prepared," Pettis said. "Not like, 'Oh, we have another workout. Oh, we have to do squats today, or we got a 24-period practice.' It's we're here to work and get better."

Browning framed it differently. The Huskies quarterback believes Pettis has gotten better at many of the little things that ultimately make a difference. Browning, a sophomore, hopes he can make a similar jump between his second and third seasons.

"I think he's always worked hard but you kind of get over that curve where you have these little things you need to work on," Browning said. "I'll probably have the same thing. You've got this curve you have to get over and once you get over that curve then you start playing a lot better. I've thought he always worked hard, always was a very productive receiver. Last year he showed up on third down and in the red zone and I think he's done that this year and obviously playing really well."

Pettis had 47 combined catches between his freshman and sophomore seasons, but just two receiving touchdowns. He has surpassed that total this season, finishing with 50 catches and his 14 touchdowns receptions were tied for seventh in the country.

The reception numbers were low compared to Ross, but Pettis isn't often used on wide receiver screens the same way as Ross.

"Jake's obviously doing a lot better. Ross coming back helped a lot. He cleared a lot of stuff up for everyone else on the offense," Pettis said. "We switched up some of the plays we were calling. There was a lot of stuff that went into it. I wouldn't say there was one thing I've done that made me better this year."

Like a number of others on the offensive side of the ball, Pettis has benefited from the return of Ross. The speed and big-play ability of Ross have forced defenses to base much of their coverage on where he is on the field.

Pettis has been the biggest beneficiary. And it's why he could play such a key role against Alabama. Ross is likely to get plenty of attention from the Crimson Tide secondary, meaning Pettis, Chico McClatcher, Darrell Daniels and others must win their matchups to provide Browning with the options he needs.

Pettis will likely be one of Washington's most important players on the field on Dec. 31. And that's something.

"He's special," Ross said. "Everything about him, his work ethic, just his mental game, everything that he's been working for

# Field goal at buzzer lifts Louisiana Tech

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Jonathan Barnes kicked a game-ending 32-yard field goal and Louisiana Tech beat Navy 48-45 in the Armed Forces Bowl on Friday.

The Bulldogs (9-5) drove for the winning score after Navy freshman quarterback Malcolm Perry ran 30 yards for a touchdown on his only play.

Ryan Higgins threw for 409 yards and four touchdowns, two each to Trent Taylor and Carlos Henderson. Taylor, a 5-foot-8 senior for Louisiana Tech, set an Armed Forces Bowl with his 12 catches for 233 yards. Henderson had 10 catches for 129 yards.

Navy (9-5), which was trying for its first consecutive 10-win seasons, instead ended with its third straight loss. The Midshipmen lost the American Athletic Conference title game before its first loss to Army since 2001.

Perry, whose TD with 3:46 left tied the game for the fourth time, came in after Zach Abey took a shot to the ribs on a play that led to a targeting ejection by Tech defensive tackle Jordan Bradford.

Abey, who made only his second start, ran for 114 yards and two scores and threw for 159 yards and another touchdown.

TAKEAWAY

Louisiana Tech: Coach Skip Holtz and the Bulldogs won their third straight bowl, also reaching nine wins for the third consecutive season. It is the first time as a Division I team that Tech has accomplished both of those feats. After falling 21-17 early in the second quarter, the Bulldogs regained the lead on Henderson's 3-yard TD before Navy tied the game for the first time — but never went ahead again.

Navy: After being held to 270 yards rushing in the previous two losses, this was more like the Midshipmen triple-option offense. They had 459 total yards, 300 on the ground. Even so, it was a bitter end for Navy, which had



Louisiana Tech kicker Jonathan Barnes (10) is swarmed by teammates Russell Farris (31) and Eric Kendzior (47) following his winning field goal against Navy and during the second half of the Armed Forces Bowl NCAA college football game, Friday, Dec. 23, 2016, in Fort Worth, Texas.

AP Photo/Jim Cowser

won three straight bowl games — a streak that started with an Armed Forces Bowl victory three years ago.

OLD DOMINION 24, EASTERN MICHIGAN 20

At Nassau, Bahamas, David Washington came to Old Dominion a year before the program started its transition to the Football Bowl Subdivision.

Five years later, he led the Monarchs to a victory in their first bowl game.

Washington threw three touchdowns passes, Ray Lawry ran for 133 yards and Old Dominion beat Eastern Michigan 24-20 on Friday in the Bahamas Bowl.

Old Dominion (10-3) didn't play football for 69 years before restarting the program in 2009. The Monarchs started at the FCS level and made the transition to the FBS in 2013, where they play

in Conference USA.

"I know I haven't been here since the program started, but I've been here five years," Washington said. "So it kind of feels like my baby. We just took it to a bowl game and won the bowl game so it's just really special."

Eastern Michigan (7-6) lost in its first bowl appearance since 1987. The Eagles were led by Brogan Roback, who completed 26 of 46 passes for 300 yards, two touchdowns and one interception. Roback threw for at least 300 yards in six of his final seven games.

"We were moving the ball," Roback said. "We just weren't really finishing."

Old Dominion had a 10-0 halftime lead, but Eastern Michigan rallied to tie it at 17 late in the third quarter on Paul Fricano's 24-yard field goal.

The Monarchs took the lead for good on Washington's third

touchdown pass, which went for 5 yards to Jonathan Duhart and put Old Dominion up 24-17.

"We played really good football at times, but it just wasn't quite good enough to win," Eastern Michigan coach Chris Creighton said. "It's a heartbreaking locker room right now. We've had a wonderful week here. This isn't the way we wanted it to end."

ODU controlled the game in the first half and an impressive 47-yard touchdown throw from Washington to Zach Pascal gave the Monarchs their 10-0 halftime advantage.

Washington — who was a receiver earlier in his collegiate career — evaded multiple defenders on the play, before stepping up and throwing to Pascal in the end zone.

Old Dominion has beaten Eastern Michigan in each of the past three seasons, including 17-3 in 2014 and 38-34 in 2015.

# Taggart picks Harbaugh pupil to coach wide receivers

EUGENE — Willie Taggart added a second member to his coaching staff when he announced the hiring of Jimmie Dougherty as wide receivers coach on Friday.

Dougherty comes to Oregon after spending a year under Jim Harbaugh at Michigan, serving as an offensive analyst for the nation's 12th-best scoring team (41.0 ppg).

Prior to joining Harbaugh in Ann Arbor, Dougherty worked for three seasons (2013-15) as assistant head coach, wide receivers coach and passing game coordinator at San Jose State. While with the Spartans, Dougherty helped run an offense that set 10 single-season team records and saw players establish more than 35 individual school marks.

Dougherty has experience coaching in the Pac-12 before going to San Jose State, coaching wide receivers at Washington from 2009-12.

He first teamed up with Harbaugh in 2004 at San Diego, where he spent his first four seasons with the Torreros in multiple capacities.

Dougherty coached wide receivers in his first year before taking over as tight ends coach in 2005, and moved into the role of passing game coordinator and quarterbacks coach in 2006-07 where he groomed Josh Johnson, the school's all-time leading passer.

In 2008, Dougherty was elevated to offensive coordinator and led an offense that averaged 35.3 points per game.

A quarterback at Missouri for four seasons during his playing days (1997-2001), Dougherty began his coaching career as a defensive backs coach at Illinois Wesleyan during the 2002 and 2003 seasons.



Dougherty

# Oklahoma's Joe Mixon tearfully apologizes for punching woman

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — Oklahoma running back Joe Mixon made a tearful public apology Friday, more than two years after punching a woman and breaking bones in her face.

As Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops looked on, Mixon spoke at a news conference Friday afternoon, more than two years after he assaulted Amelia Molitor and broke her jaw and cheekbone. Mixon said he wanted to address the issue earlier, but his legal team advised him not to.

"I'm here to apologize to Miss Molitor," he said. "I apologize to Coach Stoops, I apologize to President (David) Boren, the AD (athletic director Joe Castiglione), my teammates. And most of all, my family. I let a lot of people down."

Mixon was suspended for a year after the incident.

Though Molitor shoved and slapped him first, Mixon said hitting a woman is unacceptable, even if provoked.

"Honestly, it really doesn't matter what she did," he said during the 26-minute session. "It's all on me the reason why we're in this position right now. I take full responsibility of what happened that night. It's never OK to hit a woman. Never. I will preach to anybody. It's never OK. Hopefully to people around the world will learn from my mistake. I'm willing to teach."

The All-Big 12 performer said if it happened now, he would respond differently.

"If I could go back, I would do whatever I could to change the outcome of that situation," he said. "I definitely would have walked or ran away and went about the situation differently. I wouldn't have been in that



Steve Sisney/The Oklahoman via AP

Oklahoma football player Joe Mixon speaks out for the first time since the release of a 2014 video showing him striking Amelia Molitor, at a press conference in Norman, Okla., Friday.

situation."

Mixon said he was disappointed he let down his team, the university and his family. He struggled to speak when he began talking about

hard, and I disappointed her," he said. "She's my queen, and I apologize to you, mom."

Mixon's legal advisers released video of the punch last week, and Mixon said he wishes it had come out sooner. Since the video came out, there has been a backlash against Mixon, Stoops and the university. Mixon said he hasn't paid attention to his fellow students much on campus, but his teammates have been supportive.

"I can't do nothing but thank my teammates for lifting up my spirits," he said. "Just wanting me to come out and go hard for them every day, and I feel like honestly that's how I give back to them. I can only lead by example on and off the field by words, by my actions. Honestly, I'm willing to do anything for my teammates."

Mixon said he has matured and learned since

July 2014.

"Well, at the time, as you guys know, I was 17, 18 years old," he said. "I was young. Right now I'm 20 years old. I've grown up a lot over the 2 1/2-3 years I've been at OU. Like I said, I can't do nothing but thank coach Stoops for giving me a second chance and having me prove to everyone that I deserve it."

Mixon said he's willing to speak against violence against women.

"I think when I have the opportunity to do that I'll seize the moment and do whatever I can to be the person — the bigger person — and the man I should be," he said. "I want to be that influence for young kids that are lost out there or in certain situations I was in. Hopefully, I can teach them for the next time and how to react a certain way."