

College Football

# Position battles heating up on Ducks' defensive line

By RYAN THORBURN  
The Register-Guard

EUGENE — The combined weight of the three players competing at nose tackle for Oregon is roughly the equivalent of a grand piano.

Defensive coordinator Jim Leavitt is anxious to see if a rotation of Jordon Scott, Gary Baker and Austin Faoliu can perform in concert together with the simplicity of chopsticks and as melodiously as Chopin.

"I think there's a real battle between Austin and Jordon and Gary," Leavitt said after reviewing Tuesday's scrimmage. "Those three guys are all playing at nose and are really battling. It's tight now, it really is."

Scott has received rave reviews from his coaches and peers since setting foot on campus. The 6-foot-1, 333-pound true freshman has been running with the first team since Leavitt began installing his

3-4 defense in the spring.

The Ducks' interior offensive linemen have said battling Scott during fall camp is good preparation for the type of players they will have to block when Oregon faces teams like Stanford, Utah and Washington.

"Jordon is obviously a load. He's a big, big guy," left guard Shane Lemieux said. "Jordon is still young, but he's shown he can play with the big boys."

Baker, who is listed at 6-3, 325 pounds, made four starts on last season's defensive line, which was ravaged by injuries and suspensions.

During Oregon's loss at USC, the Upland, California, native finished with a career-high five tackles.

"I learned a lot, especially from Henry Mondeaux," Baker said of playing in seven games as a redshirt freshman. "He's one of the guys that I've looked up to and he's taught me the ropes."

Baker has taken first-team reps

at nose tackle when Scott has sat out to heal from the effects of physical fall camp practices.

"I've been happy with Gary," Leavitt said. "I think Gary's done some really good things."

Faoliu, a 6-3, 289-pound true freshman, will also be given an opportunity to make an immediate impact when Oregon opens the season on Sept. 2 against Southern Utah at Autzen Stadium.

"Austin is different," Lemieux said. "He's a stout guy like Jordon, but at the same time he's finesse and he's got speed. He's never going to one-on-one let you block him. He's always going to use a move, he's always going to try to slip out of a double team. He's stout, but at the same time he's pretty slippery."

Mondeaux and Elijah George are the senior leaders on the defensive line after combining for 50 tackles in 2016. Leavitt also needs Jalen Jelks, a talented but oft-injured junior, to have a breakout season.

The Ducks ranked 126th out of

128 FBS teams in points allowed (41.4 ppg) and yards allowed (518.4 ypg) last season.

The two starting defensive tackles in Brady Hoke's 4-3 front, Rex Manu (injured) and Austin Maloata (dismissed by Mark Helfrich), won't be able to help Leavitt's transition this year.

First-year Oregon coach Willie Taggart also dismissed defensive ends Torrodney Prevot and Eddie Heard, and defensive tackles Canton Kaumatule and Ratu Mafileo medically retired.

Defensive tackle Wayne Tei-Kirby transferred to BYU following the coaching change, and true freshman Rutger Reitmaier decided to transfer after spring practice.

Popo Aumavae, another true freshman, has missed the majority of fall camp with an arm injury.

"Even though we're small in numbers on the D-line, we're still fairly good," Baker said. "We're all just looking ahead. We're not

worrying about last year anymore, just pushing forward."

Redshirt sophomore Drayton Carlberg and redshirt freshman Hunter Kampmoyer add some depth on the defensive line.

The Ducks are still waiting for Clemson graduate transfer Scott Pagano to get medically cleared to practice.

"I see him every day, I ask him every day. He's so tired of it," Leavitt said when asked about a timetable for Pagano's recovery from spring foot surgery. "We've got to wait until we get him out there."

Oregon's D-line welcomed Malik Young, a 6-foot-2, 301-pound transfer from East Arizona College, to the team on Thursday.

"There's a lot of competition going on right now," Leavitt said. "Between our ones and twos on our defense it's really, really tight. In a number of those situations we're not sure yet. That could continue through the year."

## BEAVERS:

Continued from 1B

four-star recruit, originally committed to Washington State but was also pursued by Oregon and Nebraska. As a senior at Berean Christian High School last season he caught 94 passes for 1,521 yards and 21 touchdowns.

A big reason he flipped to Oregon State was assistant coach Dave Baldwin, whose bond with the Hodgins family goes back a ways.

Baldwin was the head coach at San Jose State when Hodgins' dad, James, played. A fullback, James Hodgins went on to play eight seasons in the NFL for several teams.

"Coach Baldwin coached my dad in college so I already had a connection with him. I already knew that he was a cool guy. He'd always be at my house and we'd be talking it up," Hodgins told reporters before the start of fall camp.

"I went to the Oregon State satellite camp in the Bay Area when I was about a sophomore so I got to meet the coaches early and everything. So just ever since then we've been building a great connection."

The connection has proven beneficial to Oregon State: Hodgins' younger brother Isaac has also committed to the Beavers.

Hodgins said Jarmon took him under his wing before he decided to leave the Beavers. Villamin and Timmy Hernandez have been helping him out since. And the entire group is working under new position coach Jason Phillips, who came to Oregon State after a stint at Kansas.

"All the countless of hours of work have come down to this moment," Hodgins said, "and I just can't wait to put on the jersey and go out there and play."

## HAWKS: Wilson impressive again leading first-team offense

Continued from 1B

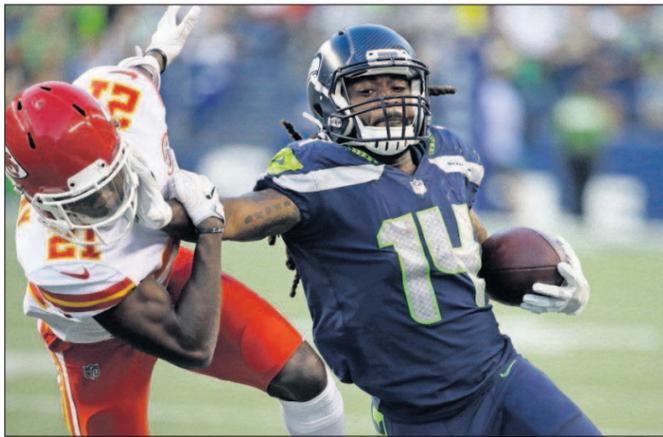
Kansas City after starting his career with the Seahawks.

Ware's injury was part of a lackluster effort from Kansas City's offense. Smith was 7 of 17 for just 44 yards although there were a handful of drops. The Chiefs had just 102 total yards in the first half against Seattle's starters and Kansas City's only touchdown came on a 95-yard kickoff return from De'Anthony Thomas.

Wilson's stellar preseason continued, playing the entire first half and one drive of the second half.

He threw a 2-yard touchdown to Tre Madden and led Seattle on four scoring drives, including three field goals by Blair Walsh. In parts of three preseason games, Wilson is 29 of 41 for 447 yards, three touchdowns and no interceptions.

The biggest area of concern for Seattle coming into the week was how the offensive line would respond



Seattle Seahawks' J.D. McKissic pushes away Kansas City Chiefs' Eric Murray on a kick return during the second half of a preseason Friday in Seattle. The Seahawks won 26-13.

AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

to the loss of left tackle Fant. His replacement, Rees Odhiambo, went mostly unnoticed with the exception of one play early in the third quarter.

Chris Jones, in his preseason debut following offseason knee surgery, made Odhiambo whiff and engulfed Wilson for the only sack allowed by

the Seahawks starters.

**BACKUP BATTLE:** The backup QB role in Seattle could be back open after Trevone Boykin had a miserable night and Austin Davis was solid. Boykin missed on all six attempts with an interception, while Davis was 5-of-5 for 64 yards and a 28-yard TD pass to Tanner McEvoy in the fourth quarter.

**BENNETT SITS:** Seahawks DE Michael Bennett continued to sit on the Seattle bench during the national anthem. For the second straight week, teammate Justin Britt stood next to Bennett with his right hand on Bennett. Cliff Avril stood for most of the anthem before sitting next to Bennett at the end.

**SITTING OUT:** Seattle wide receiver Tyler Lockett went through full pregame warmups but did not play as he continues to recover from a broken leg suffered late last season. Also sitting out was running backs Thomas Rawls and C.J. Prosise, and linebacker Michael Wilhoite.

## MARINERS: Cano doesn't start, strikes out when facing old team

Continued from 1B

year career. Just 12 days before, 20-year-old Boston rookie Rafael Devers became the second.

James Pazos (4-4) tossed a perfect inning against his former team and Edwin Diaz got three outs for his 30th save.

Todd Frazier flied out to deep left and Brett Gardner later stole second before Diaz fanned Aaron Hicks on the next pitch for the final out.

New York stranded 13 runners and left the bases loaded three times — twice on strikeouts by Frazier, batting ninth for the first time in his career.

One day after brawling with the Tigers in Detroit, Yankees catchers Gary Sanchez and Austin Romine were among four players suspended by Major League Baseball. Sanchez was banned for

four games and Romine two, but both appealed — keeping them eligible to play until the process is complete.

Sanchez nearly hit an early grand slam, but his two-out fly was caught in the left-field corner.

Seattle loaded the bases with one out in the ninth, but Ben Gamel fouled out and pinch-hitter Robinson Cano struck out on three pitches against Dellin Betances.

A buzz went up in the crowd of 42,057 when Cano stepped into the on-deck circle to get loose. He wore a teal and light blue Mariners jersey on Players Weekend with "Don't You Know" written across the back, the nickname (sort of) given to him by New York radio broadcaster John Sterling when Cano played in pinstripes.

Fans roared when Betances made quick work of the former Yankees star, who didn't start due

to a tender hamstring.

Wearing the nickname "Dub" on the back of his blue and gray jersey, CC Sabathia was in top form for the Yankees. The big left-hander allowed only Zunino's 19th homer in seven sharp innings. He gave up five hits and struck out six on "Star Wars" night at the ballpark.

With the Yankees trailing 1-0 in the eighth, Aaron Judge drew a one-out walk from ex-New York reliever David Phelps. Didi Gregorius lined a double to left-center, where center fielder Guillermo Heredia booted the ball as he tried to cut it off. The error allowed Judge to score the tying run.

Gregorius made an ill-timed baserunning blunder when he got thrown out at third trying to advance on a grounder to shortstop. Two more walks by Phelps loaded the bases before Nick Vincent struck out Frazier to end the inning.

Sabathia and the Yankees caught a break when Heredia's two-out double in the second bounced over the wall for a ground-rule double, preventing Zunino from scoring from first.

Seattle starter Ariel Miranda was pulled with a 1-0 lead in the fifth, one out shy of qualifying for a win. He walked four and left the bases loaded twice, throwing only 52 of 99 pitches for strikes.

**ROSTER MOVES**

Seattle sent OF Leonys Martin outright to Triple-A Tacoma. ... To make room for Castro, the Yankees optioned INF-OF Tyler Wade to Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

**UP NEXT**

Seattle RHP Yovani Gallardo (5-9, 5.75 ERA) starts Saturday afternoon against Yankees RHP Sonny Gray (7-8, 3.38), who has given up two earned runs or fewer in each of his past 10 starts.

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