

PAC-12: Kelly says NFL time will help him

Continued from 1B

"I think the game itself has changed. So I think you have to change with it. I've had great experience since I left Oregon from a football standpoint," he said. "So being in the NFL for four years, and then last year being out and getting a chance to study the game was — I think will help me."

BACK TO WHERE HE STARTED: Originally a walk-on, Smith was a four-year starter at quarterback at Oregon State and helped lead the Beavers to a Fiesta Bowl victory following the 2000 season. He returns to Corvallis after a stint at Washington, where he was an assistant to head coach Chris Petersen.

He has a challenging task at Oregon State, which won just one game last season and saw coach Gary Andersen depart unexpectedly in the middle of the season. He also has a challenge in the team's opener: the Beavers start at Ohio State on Saturday.

LOVE WINS: The Heisman runner-up returned to the Cardinal for his senior season with lofty goals, but not necessarily on the field. He wants to graduate with a Stanford degree in human biology, with hopes that he could someday be a doctor.

Love rushed for 2,118 yards last season, most ever for an FBS player

who returned to school the following year.

ATOP THE QB CLASS: Browning revealed his decision to stay at Washington last December after having what some said was a lackluster season. He finished with 2,719 yards passing and 19 touchdowns, falling well short of the 43 TDs he had his sophomore year.

Petersen said Browning needs to show consistency.

"That's what we're looking for in Jake, to play the most difficult position in all of sports at a really high, elite level play after play after play," Petersen said.

ALSO STAYING: Washington also sees the return of Myles Gaskin, who has rushed for more than 1,000 yards and at least 10 touchdowns in each of the last three seasons. ... The Trojans have three seniors who considered the draft before ultimately staying: linebacker Cameron Smith, safety Marvell Tell and cornerback Iman Marshall.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL: Probably the best "return" of the season is Stanford inside linebacker Ryan Beecher, who is back with the team after fighting non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. His last chemotherapy session was on June 4.

Beecher appeared in 13 games last season as a junior and made three tackles for the Cardinal.

BUCKS: One of only eight Thursday Week 1 games

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senior Trent Sorey begins his first year as the starter after serving as the backup for the past two seasons.

Sorey has been known more for his running ability than throwing ability so far in high school, and junior Cooper Roberts has been playing well enough in practice that Davis has hinted that Roberts may push for playing time. But as of now, Davis says that Sorey has earned the right to be the guy.

"We're going to ride him and let him go develop under center," Davis said. "He's untested a bit in that position after playing behind Nick Bower, so I'm going to go ahead and give him a bit of a leash and let him go be an athlete. Do I expect to see Cooper Roberts under center at some point? Yeah, I do. But we're going to go give Trent the full confidence as our starting guy."

THURSDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL: Pendleton and La Grande's game is one of only eight Week 1 games that are being played on Thursday night as opposed to the typical Friday night spot. Davis said the reason for the move is a shortage of officials in the Blue Mountain Officials Association is forcing a few games each week to be moved to Thursday and/or Saturday to help the association cover the games.

"Everyone chooses a game to go to Thursday

to allow them to spread their workload, so I figured Thursday was a good day for the first one," Davis said. "First week of school, it works out well. I don't think it's going to take us out of our game, it's actually better because these kids are ready to go play."

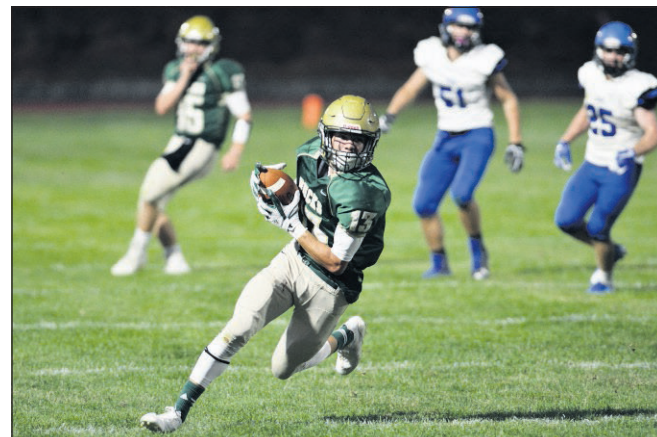
KEYS TO A BUCKAROOS WIN: Davis believes there are four main things that the Buckaroos need to do to win on Thursday: disciplined defense, a quality game from Sorey, establish a run game and take care of the football — perhaps none more important than the last. In the previous meeting, Pendleton turned the ball over five times on the way to the loss.

"Our defense has to fly around with the same speed and tenacity that we've seen so far in this preseason," Davis said. "Our front seven has to contain the quarterback and our defensive backs have to stay on their receivers throughout the play. Offensively, Trent's got to get going a bit. The good thing is we have a couple of tailbacks that we can hang our hats on with Aiden Patterson and Shawn Yeager ... I think we can truly establish a run game early and then get the ball in our athletes hands with short, concise passes."

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Pendleton's Willie Camp gestures in the end zone after scoring a touchdown in the Bucks' 36-29 loss to La Grande last year.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Pendleton's Blake Davis runs the ball up field in the Bucks' 36-29 loss to La Grande last year.

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