

Sports

Ducks rally to win classic Rose Bowl

■ Oregon's offense sputters much of the game, but Justin Herbert's third touchdown run in the fourth quarter is decisive

By Greg Beacham
AP Sports Writer

PASADENA, Calif. — Justin Herbert faked a handoff and went on the run of his life in the fourth quarter of the Rose Bowl.

Oregon's 6-foot-6 quarterback gracefully stiff-armed Wisconsin linebacker Jack Sanborn at the line of scrimmage. He surged downfield, found his blockers and sprinted to the green-painted end zone, even absorbing a very late hit from the frustrated Badgers as a reward.

The Eugene kid who took over his beloved hometown team during its worst season of this century had just scored the decisive touchdown of the biggest win of his career. A few minutes and a couple of big passes later, the Ducks all celebrated amid confetti and roses at midfield after Herbert's final college game.

"I wish it wasn't over," Herbert said. "This has been the best four years of my life. I've been honored to be a part of this team."

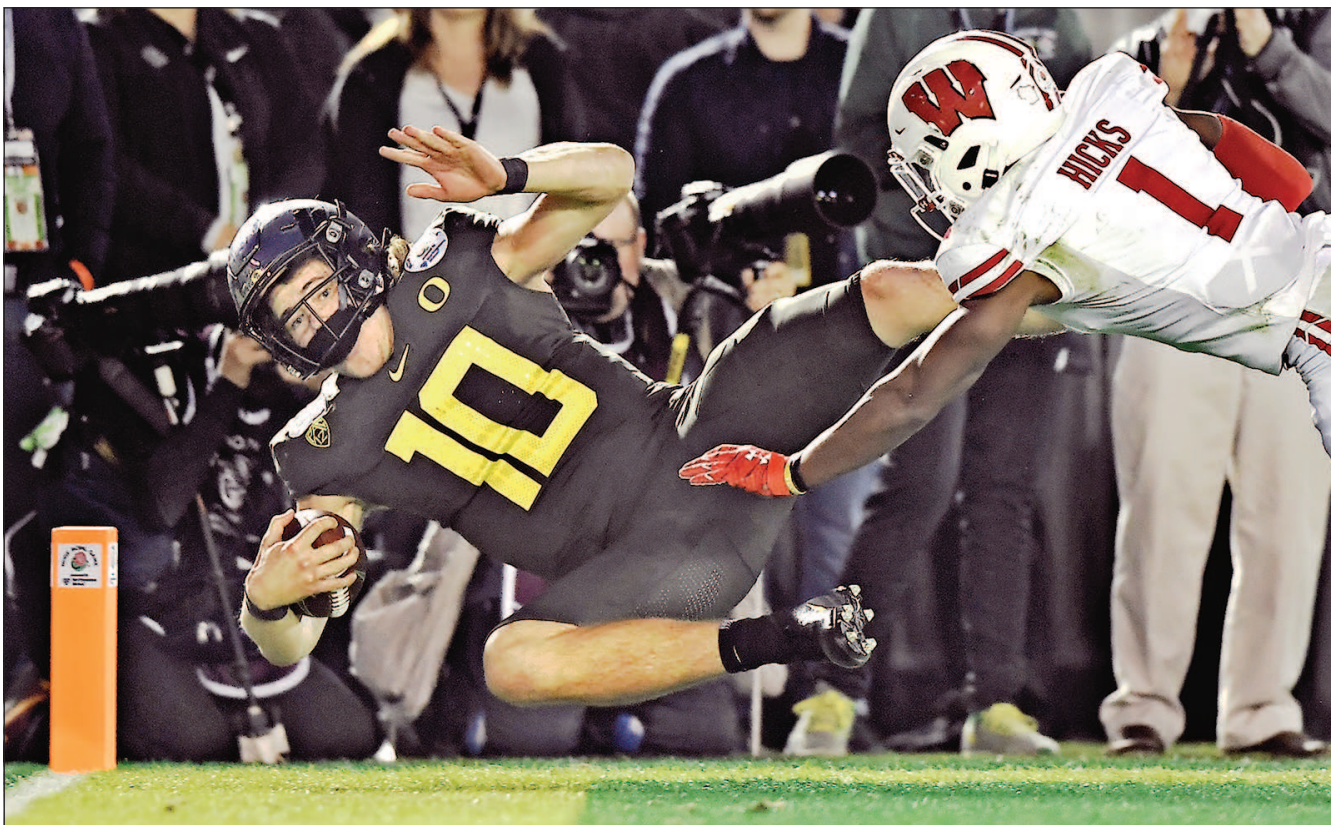
Herbert scored his third rushing touchdown of the 106th Rose Bowl on that thrilling 30-yard run with 7:41 to play Wednesday night, and No. 7 Oregon held off No. 11 Wisconsin 28-27 to win its third straight trip to the Granddaddy of Them All.

Herbert passed for just 138 yards without a touchdown, and Oregon (12-2) managed just 204 yards of offense — the fewest by any Rose Bowl team in 40 years. The Ducks still managed to win yet another frenetic edition of this venerated bowl game, surviving six lead changes and big special-teams mistakes by both schools.

While the offense sputtered, the Ducks scored 21 points off the Badgers' four turnovers, including Brady Breeze's early 31-yard fumble return for a TD off a botched punt.

And on the next snap after Breeze forced another fumble in the fourth quarter, Herbert rambled through the Wisconsin defense for that 30-yard score in what's sure to be the signature moment of the four-year starter's career.

"I'm going to be honest with you, we've been telling him to run all year," Oregon linebacker La'Mar Winston Jr. said. "He runs in practice and torches, so I told him, 'Man, pull that thing and get loose.' Stiff-arming dudes. Juking dudes. Is he a running back or a quarterback? We



Oregon quarterback Justin Herbert (10) scores the go-ahead touchdown on a 30-yard run ahead of Wisconsin cornerback Faion Hicks in the fourth quarter during the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, on Wednesday.



Oregon safety Brady Breeze breaks up a pass intended for Wisconsin receiver Kendrick Pryor, right, in the third quarter during the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, on Wednesday.

don't know."

Winston's praise aside, Herbert had only 10 rushing touchdowns in the first 41 starts of his career. He turned into a big-play ball-carrier on Arroyo Seco's hallowed ground, and Oregon improbably relied on its quarter-

back's long legs to grind out a landmark victory under second-year head coach Mario Cristobal, Herbert's third coach in four years.

Herbert scored on runs of 4 and 5 yards in the first half, stiff-arming Wisconsin defenders on both runs. After

his go-ahead TD, Herbert got back to what he normally does best: He made a key 12-yard throw to Mycah Pittman for a first down with 1:51 to play, and his 28-yard throw to Juwan Johnson with 1:03 left allowed the Ducks to run out the clock.

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— Oregon quarterback Justin Herbert

"We knew coming in that he was athletic," Sanborn said. "We didn't have good angles and miscommunications. Something we have to be better at in a game like this. It's not the first game he ran with the ball."

Three years after coach Mark Helfrich was fired when the Ducks went 4-8 in Herbert's freshman season, Oregon held on to cap a Pac-12 championship campaign with its 12th win in 13 games and the fourth Rose Bowl victory in school history.

"To realize where we were, and where we are now, it's been a great journey," Herbert said. "For us to stick together through those tough times is just a testament to all the guys on the team, and all the hard work we've put in."

Aron Cruickshank returned an early kickoff 95 yards for a touchdown for the Big Ten runner-up Badgers (10-4), but they lost in their fourth consecutive trip to Pasadena over the last 10 years, including two losses to Oregon.

Jonathan Taylor rushed for 94 yards and Quintez Cephus caught seven passes for 59 yards and a score, but Wisconsin quarterback

Jack Coan's offense couldn't capitalize on its whopping advantages in time of possession (38:03-21:57) and total yards (322-204).

"There's a slim chance you could win, but it definitely puts you in a tough position when you have self-inflicted penalties, special teams problems, turnovers," said Taylor, who is likely headed to the NFL. "When you're playing an elite team like Oregon, a great team like that, they'll capitalize on those mistakes."

BIG RETURN

Herbert scored his first TD on the Ducks' drive from the kickoff in 68-degree temperatures on another postcard-perfect New Year's Day in Pasadena, but Cruickshank took the ensuing kick straight down the Oregon sideline for an electrifying score and a rarity in the Rose Bowl.

The kickoff return was just the second for a touchdown in Wisconsin's lengthy bowl history, but just the third in 106 Rose Bowls — and the first in 17 years.

BOTCHED PUNT

Oregon got a break right after halftime when Wisconsin punter Anthony Lotti caught the snap, but dropped the ball on the ground instead of kicking it under pressure. Breeze alertly picked it up and sprinted for the go-ahead score.

The Badgers responded with a drive capped by Mason Stokke's 2-yard scoring run, and they went up 27-21 on a field goal with 12:09 to play.

But Breeze forced another fumble by Wisconsin's Danny Davis with a big hit, and Herbert took the next snap on his 30-yard TD run.

THE TAKEAWAY

- Wisconsin: The Badgers will kick themselves for years after every missed opportunity here. The offense couldn't finish drives, while the defense appeared ready for everything except Herbert's elusiveness. They can build on this resilient season, but their Rose Bowl drought continues.

- Oregon: Herbert could be sorely missed next season, both for his all-around skill set and his incredible poise under pressure. But the Ducks are once again ascendant, with this victory punctuating a two-year rise under Cristobal that puts them back on top of the West Coast and beyond.

Knicks shut down Lillard, hand Blazers 5th straight loss

By Brian Mahoney
AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK — The shots were falling. The crowd was roaring. Everything was set up for this to be Carmelo Anthony's night.

Then he sat down to start the fourth quarter, and the Knicks had ruined those hopes by the time he got back up.

Mitchell Robinson made all 11 shots and had 22 points, Julius Randle added 22 points and 13 rebounds, and New York spoiled Anthony's strong return to Madison Square Garden by beating the Portland Trail Blazers 117-93 on Wednesday for its season-high third straight victory.

Anthony scored 26 points, his most since returning to the NBA in November after a year absence, and was cheered before and during the game at the arena where he

played 6½ seasons. But he was on the bench at the start of the Knicks' 14-0 run early in the fourth quarter that broke open the game and sent the Trail Blazers to their fifth straight loss.

"Overall, the experience and just being back today I think is the most important thing," Anthony said. "The loss is something that we'll get to the bottom of. We'll figure it out. It happens. You have to take your hat off to those guys, they played extremely well tonight. The way that they shot the ball, the way that they were locked in, they deserved to win tonight."

Reggie Bullock made two 3-pointers during the spurt and scored 11 points in his Knicks debut. He signed with the team during the summer but hadn't played because of a herniated disk.

"It's just great to be back out there seeing the ball go

through the hoop and playing out there with my teammates," Bullock said. "I signed here for a reason, and I knew what the guys that we signed were capable of doing. I'm glad to be out there playing with them."

Damian Lillard was held to 11 points on 5-for-20 shooting after scoring 30 or more in the previous three games. The All-Star guard did have 10 rebounds and eight assists, but missed his first six 3-pointers before making his only one of the game.

That was on the final shot of the third quarter, cutting New York's lead to 83-77, and he then joined Anthony on the bench. The Blazers were still down just six after consecutive baskets by CJ McCollum, but Bullock made his two 3s and Frank Ntilikina and Bobby Portis hit one apiece in between. Portis then finished the run with

two free throws to push the lead to 101-81.

Anthony, who shot 4 for 16 in a loss to Phoenix on Monday, and Lillard returned when the lead reached 12 but by then the Knicks were already rolling.

"Offensively it was good to see Melo have a game, but as I said at the beginning of the fourth quarter, Melo and Dame were out and that's kind of when they made their run and it got away from us," Portland coach Terry Stotts said.

Anthony was loudly cheered when he was the last Portland player introduced during starting lineups and many times when he had the ball. But the cheers were soon for Robinson, whose high-flying performance tied the Knicks record for most makes without a miss.

He said he was motivated after his team was beaten

badly in practice Tuesday by starting forward Marcus Morris' squad, who taunted the losers.

"I came in the game (tonight) and just dominated and couldn't do it without them," Robinson said.

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