

Sports

Justin Herbert could become Ducks' best pro QB in decades

■ Oregon rookie, pressed into starting duty unexpectedly, has been impressive

For the past two games, the Los Angeles Chargers have had to rely on rookie signal caller and Oregon Duck alum Justin Herbert to lead their offense. Although the 22-year-old hasn't found his first victory in his young NFL career, the amount of promise that Herbert has exhibited shows that he can be the best quarterback to come from Eugene in the past couple decades.

Two weeks ago, kickoff was moments away when the Chargers found out that veteran quarterback Tyrod Taylor was unable to play, due to what the sports world found out later was a punctured lung he sustained while being given an injection by a team doctor.

Herbert, asked to step in against the reigning Super Bowl champions Kansas City Chiefs, had an impressive NFL debut. Taking the Chiefs into overtime, Herbert threw for over 300 yards with just one interception. The Chiefs came away the victors after kicking a field goal in overtime to win 23-20.

Herbert impressed some notable NFL alumni. Tony Romo, who played over a decade for the Dallas Cowboys, was effusive in his praise for Herbert.

"This kid has made great decision after great decision and really just two balls were barely high and this is as good of a start as I've seen in some time," Romo, a TV analyst, said during the broadcast of the Chargers-Chiefs game. "I'm telling you, this kid is for real. He's special."

This past Sunday, the Chargers played the Carolina Panthers. Although they were unable to gain a victory,



Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times-TNS

Justin Herbert of the Los Angeles Chargers delivers a pass under pressure during a drive late in the game against the Kansas City Chiefs on Sept. 20.



COREY KIRK

Herbert completed more than 70% of his passes and again surpassed the 300-yard mark. He joins Kyler Murray and Cam Newton as the third

quarterback in NFL history to throw for more than 300 yards in their first two career starts.

How will Justin Herbert's career trajectory go? I don't have a crystal ball. Herbert is still in search of his first victory, slated to face Tom Brady, Drew Brees and their respective teams in the coming weeks. And Herbert hasn't secured the starting role when Taylor returns.

What is certain is that Herbert's potential is immensely high. Although it is too early to put him in the same conversation with the likes of former Ducks Dan Fouts and Norm Van Brocklin, both Hall of

"This kid has made great decision after great decision. This kid is for real. He's special."

— Tony Romo, former NFL quarterback, talking about Los Angeles Chargers rookie Justin Herbert

Fame quarterbacks, Herbert looks capable of surpassing the NFL achievements of Oregon stars Joey Harrington and Marcus Mariota.

Harrington, who was the Ducks signal caller at the turn of the century, played for four teams in his 7-year NFL career. When he was drafted by the Detroit Lions with the third overall pick in 2002, he was seen to be a savior. But Harrington struggled to meet those high expectations. He threw more interceptions (85) than he did touchdowns (79).

Mariota caught the college football fandom by storm back in 2014 as he helped lead the Ducks to a 13-2 record, finishing number two in the college rankings with a Rose Bowl victory and Heisman Trophy. Going into the 2015 NFL Draft, Mariota was a highly sought

after commodity, and the Tennessee Titans picked him with the second pick overall.

Almost five years later, with Mariota showing signs of brilliance but also battling injuries, the Titans went with Ryan Tannehill and later traded Mariota, who is now backing up Derek Carr in Las Vegas.

Although Herbert's career has barely begun, he has great potential to eclipse the NFL careers of other fellow Oregon alumni. The more chances Herbert has to throw to talented receivers such as Austin Ekeler and Keenan Allen, the better he's likely to get.

I think Herbert will leave his mark on the NFL and become the Oregon Duck with the most productive career as a quarterback so far in the 21st century.

Former BSU star Rypien to start for Broncos

By Arnie Stapleton
AP Pro Football Writer

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Brett Rypien kept his head up when he went undrafted out of Boise State. He didn't get discouraged when he twice got cut by the Denver Broncos.

He didn't flinch when the Broncos valued Brandon Allen over him last year to serve as a backup to Joe Flacco and then Drew Lock.

Rypien's determination didn't waver when the Broncos signed Jeff Driskel last offseason or Blake Bortles last week.

"I wouldn't necessarily say discouraged, no," Rypien said after being named the starter for the Broncos' game against the New York Jets on Thursday night in a matchup of reeling 0-3 teams. "I've always just tried to take the mentality of get better every single day."

Helping him with that perseverance was his uncle, former Washington quarterback Mark Rypien.

"He sat his first two years on IR, so having some conversations with him about (how) he overcame adversity throughout his first two years and then being able to win a Super Bowl and be a starter for a few years" helped him learn how to cope and bide his time, Brett Rypien said. "So, I definitely don't think I ever lost hope or was discouraged. I just tried to get better."

Coach Vic Fangio accidentally declared Rypien's 57-year-old uncle the starter over Driskel on Tuesday.

"Yeah, we're going to start Mark — I mean Brett — I keep calling him Mark at times because of his uncle," Fangio said.

Serena Williams withdraws from French Open

By Jerome Pugmire and Howard Fendrich
AP Sports Writers

PARIS (AP) — Saying she is "struggling to walk," Serena Williams ended her latest bid for a 24th Grand Slam title and withdrew from the French Open before her second-round match Wednesday because of an injured Achilles heel.

Williams hurt herself during her semifinal loss at the U.S. Open three weeks ago, which she called "bad timing" and "bad luck," and went to lengths to make clear she didn't think this was any sort of sign that she can't continue to pursue trophies in the future.

More simply, Williams said, she hasn't had "enough time to properly heal" and needs "four to six weeks of sitting, doing nothing."

The sudden announcement came roughly an hour before the 39-year-old American was supposed to head out onto Court Philippe Chatrier to face Tsvetana Pironkova.

Williams said it is "more than likely" she will not play another tournament in 2020.

Predicting the National Football League: Week 4

Current Record: 18-12-1

Denver Broncos (0-3) vs. New York Jets (0-3)

Although the Broncos seemed to have guys more injured than healthy, I do feel they do have the slight edge on the Jets when it comes to consistency. The Denver Broncos will defeat the New York Jets, 10-3.

New Orleans Saints (1-2) vs. Detroit Lions (1-2)

I was shocked to see the Saints drop two of their first three games, but they have had a pretty tough schedule.

Although Saints wide receiver Michael Thomas is slowly coming back from a high ankle sprain, the New Orleans offense is too much for the Lions defense. The Saints will defeat the Lions, 21-7.

Los Angeles Chargers (1-2) vs. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2-1)

The ageless wonder Tom Brady and the Buccaneers offense are clicking on all cylinders. Justin Herbert will continue flash signs as the future quarter for the Chargers, but the Buccaneers will defeat the Chargers, 28-21.

Jacksonville Jaguars (1-2) vs. Cincinnati Bengals (0-2-1)

This game is going to be interesting for the quarterback match up between Gardner Minshew and Joe Burrow.



COREY KIRK

Jacksonville has been in a bit of a slump recently and I feel like this will continue, as the Bengals defeat the Jaguars, 10-9.

Minnesota Vikings (0-3) vs. Houston Texans (0-3)

The Texans started the season against the Chiefs, Ravens and Steelers, all of which could make deep playoff runs. The Vikings are still struggling to find their identity on both sides of the ball. I expect Deshaun Watson to have his best showing this season as the Texans defeat the Vikings, 28-14.

Seattle Seahawks (3-0) vs. Miami Dolphins (1-2)

With MVP frontrunner Russell Wilson leading the way, the Seahawks will overwhelm the Dolphins, 28-7.

Pittsburgh Steelers (3-0) vs. Tennessee Titans (3-0)

In a match up of unbeaten teams, the Steelers' defense will be the key. The Steelers will defeat the Titans, 20-17.

Cleveland Browns (2-1) vs. Dallas Cowboys (1-2)

The Cowboys, after a last-minute loss on the road against the Seahawks, return home to host the Browns. The

Cowboys looked really good last week, with Dak Prescott throwing well, Zeke Elliott finding some holes and the defense showing promise.

The Cowboys will defeat the Browns, 24-13.

Arizona Cardinals (2-1) vs. Carolina Panthers (1-2)

The Cardinals had a strong start but were upset by the Lions last week. Facing a tremendous amount of injuries, the Panthers still managed to get their first win of the season against the Chargers. The Cardinals are better on both sides of the ball, and that will show in this game. The Cardinals will defeat the Panthers, 28-14.

Indianapolis Colts (2-1) vs. Chicago Bears (3-0)

The Colts have rallied after losing their opener to the Jacksonville Jaguars, and got big victories against the Jets and the Vikings. The Bears went with backup Nick Foles and benched former starter Mitchell Trubisky in their victory against the Falcons. I am intrigued by the Colts defense, and I'll pick the Colts to defeat the Bears, 14-10.

Baltimore Ravens (2-1) vs. Washington Football Team (1-2)

After struggling against what quarterback Lamar Jackson deemed their "kryptonite," in the Kansas City Chiefs, the Ravens travel to

Washington. I would expect for Jackson to bounce back with a big game. Washington is going to struggle, and the Ravens will defeat the Washington Football Team, 30-14.

New York Giants (0-3) vs. Los Angeles Rams (2-1)

After losing big at home, the Giants head to the new home of the Rams at Sofi Stadium, and things don't look much better for New York. The Rams lost in a close one against the Buffalo Bills, but they'll rebound at home with big games from Jared Goff and Darel Henderson Jr. The Rams will defeat the Giants, 28-14.

New England Patriots (2-1) vs. Kansas City Chiefs (3-0)

The reigning Super Bowl champions remain the team to beat. They dismantled tough opponents in the

Texans and Ravens in the first three weeks. They host a talented team in the Patriots who are coming off a big win against the Raiders, but the Chiefs are a different matter, and will defeat the Patriots, 24-21.

Buffalo Bills (3-0) vs. Las Vegas Raiders (2-1)

I'm struggling to put my thumb on the Raiders this season, as they have beaten the Panthers and Saints before losing last week to the Patriots.

The Bills are tough, and their offense is improving weekly. The Bills will defeat the Raiders, 21-17.

Philadelphia Eagles (0-2-1) vs. San Francisco 49ers (2-1)

While the Eagles continue to battle an identity crisis, they facing the injury-depleted 49ers for Sunday

Night Football. Even with backups on the field, the 49ers didn't skip a single beat last week behind quarterback Nick Mullens. After his performance, the 49ers will comfortably rest Jimmy Garopolo another week with ease. The 49ers will defeat the Eagles, 28-17.

Atlanta Falcons (0-3) vs. Green Bay Packers (3-0)

It is safe to say that the most frustrated fan base in football are backers of the Atlanta Falcons, after dropping another game out of the grip of their fingers against the Bears. Though the Falcons are capable of threatening the Packers on Monday Night Football, I can't see Atlanta winning as the Packers exploit every weakness in the Falcons defense. The Packers will defeat the Falcons, 28-21.

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