

# Nuggets rout Trail Blazers, 124-95

By MICHAEL KELLY

Associated Press

DENVER — Nikola Jokic just missed out on his third straight triple-double, finishing with 28 points, nine rebounds and nine assists, and the Denver Nuggets spoiled Chauncey Billups' return with a 124-95 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers on Sunday night, Nov. 14.

Billups, a Denver native who had two playing stints with the Nuggets, lost his head coaching debut in his hometown without star Damian Lillard.

Lillard was out with what the team called a lower abdominal tendinopathy. It is an injury the guard has dealt with before and aggravated at the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday night. Lillard played Wednesday and Friday night before Billups kept him out of Sunday night's game.

"You know Dame doesn't like to sit any game, any practice, anything, so I kind of had to force him to do this," Billups said before the game. "It's too early in the season to be playing hurt every single night. You need a break, take a break. If you don't think you need one I might have to give you one."

CJ McCollum led Portland with 21 points, and Anfernee Simons had 16 starting in place of Lillard. Portland fell to 1-7 on the road.

Six Nuggets players scored in double figures. Rookie Bones Hyland scored 18 points to establish a career high for the fourth straight game.

Jokic came out with 1:24 left in the third quarter and Denver leading 88-77 and sat out the fourth. The Blazers got within nine but Denver went on a 21-4 run at the end of the third and start of the fourth.

Jokic assisted on seven of the team's first eight baskets and didn't look for his own shot until the second quarter.

"Nikola knows the deeper we get into games the more he's going to have to take over with his scoring and be that go-to player for us," coach Michael Malone said. "He's going to read the game and whatever's given to him he's going to take and he's going to try to make him pay for whatever game plan you've come up with."

The Nuggets led by 15 early and never trailed in winning their fifth straight, all at home. They were up 67-53 at halftime and went up by 18 early in the third.

Denver held all five opponents below 100 points on the homestand despite missing key players each night.

"We have a long bench, we have a long roster and everyone can play," Jokic said. "They showed that. Whoever goes out other guys step and play really good."



Chris Pietsch/The Register-Guard-TNS

Oregon quarterback Anthony Brown dives into the end zone for a touchdown on the Ducks' opening drive of the third quarter in a 38-24 win over Washington State on Saturday, Nov. 13.

# Oregon downs Cougars with big second half

By ANNE M. PETERSON

Associated Press

EUGENE — Oregon defensive end Kayvon Thibodeaux says it's at that point of the season where every team wants to knock off the Ducks.

Anthony Brown Jr. threw for 135 yards and a touchdown while rushing for 123 yards and another score as No. 5 Oregon beat Washington State 38-24 on Saturday night, Nov. 13.

Oregon, ranked No. 3 in the College Football Playoff rankings, has won five straight and extended its winning streak at Autzen Stadium to 18 straight games, including 14 straight victories at home over Pac-12 opponents.

"Every game is a playoff game," Thibodeaux said. "Us having this target on our backs, it makes every team want to play their best. You know, one thing that we had a problem with was playing down to teams. And now I feel like we're in that mode where teams have to play up to us."

Oregon (9-1, 6-1 Pac-12) needed to win and for Stanford to beat Oregon State up the road in Corvallis earlier on Saturday to clinch the Pac-12 North. The Beavers didn't hold up their end, winning 35-14 over Stanford.

Washington State (5-5, 4-3) tied the game at 14 before halftime but Oregon pulled away in the third quarter. The loss snapped a four-game winning streak over Pac-12 opponents for the Cougars, who fell to BYU on Oct. 23 in a midseason nonconference game.

The Cougars still need one more win to become bowl eligible and perhaps redeem a season that has been marked by turbulence. Wash-



Thomas Boyd/The Oregonian-TNS

Oregon running back Byron Cardwell (No. 21) runs against the Washington State Cougars in a Pac-12 football game on Saturday, Nov. 13, 2021, at Autzen Stadium in Eugene.

ington State dismissed head coach Nick Rolovich on Oct. 18 after his refusal to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

"Our guys aren't going to quit. They're gonna keep fighting," WSU interim coach Jake Dickert said. "They're gonna keep battling. I think the biggest thing we were looking for in this game is just improvement and keep progressing in our program, keep moving forward."

Saturday's game got off to a strange start. Washington State's second play from scrimmage appeared to be a 77-yard touchdown pass from Jayden de Laura to Calvin Jackson Jr. But on review, Jackson stepped out of bounds at the Oregon 7-yard line. On the next play, de Laura fumbled out of the end zone for an Oregon touchdown.

Travis Dye plowed his way into the end zone from a yard out to give the Ducks a 7-0 lead. Verone McKinley III got his fifth interception of the season and three plays later Dye scored on an 11-

yard pass from Brown.

The Cougars closed the margin on de Laura's 14-yard pass to De'zhaun Stribling midway through the second quarter. De Laura's 1-yard keeper with 11 seconds left in the half tied it at 14.

Oregon scored on Brown's 17-yard scramble on their first series of the second half to pull back in front. The Ducks extended the lead on Camden Lewis' 22-yard field goal.

It appeared that Washington State's George Hicks III recovered a fumble by Brown in the end zone early in the fourth quarter and ran it back 50 yards. After review, the play stood.

De Laura hit Travell Harris with a 38-yard pass to get to the Oregon 11, but the Ducks' defense held and the Cougars settled for Dean Janikowski's 34-yard field goal to make it 24-17.

"I think it was another chance for us to kind of show

our resilience and show that we're gonna keep coming," Thibodeaux said. "I feel like we've trained for sudden changes. Things happen in football so just being able to come back and play the next play, that's all you have to do."

Thibodeaux, considered a top pick in the 2022 NFL draft if he chooses to go pro, had a pair of sacks and six tackles, including two tackles for loss.

Byron Caldwell ran for a 27-yard touchdown with 5:52 left before a 22-yard scoring run with 2:07 to go for the Ducks. De Laura's 2-yard TD pass to Harris ended it.

"I think this team's getting better and better every single week, in a lot of different areas, a lot of different phases," Oregon coach Mario Cristobal said. "So the sky's the limit."

Dye ran for 88 yards and a score, and had 25 yards receiving and another TD.

Oregon had more than 300 yards on the ground for the second straight game.

De Laura threw for 280 yards and two touchdowns for the Cougars. He was intercepted twice.

## The takeaway

Washington State: Washington State hasn't defeated a team ranked in the AP Top 25 since No. 25 Iowa State in the 2018 Alamo Bowl. The Cougars last defeated a team in the top 10 in 2017, when they upset No. 5 Southern California in Pullman, Washington. ... Washington State was coming off a bye.

Oregon: Last year in Pullman, the Cougars led 19-14 at halftime but the then-No. 11 Ducks pulled away in the second half, with Dye catching two second-half touchdown passes, to win 43-29.

## And takeaways

The Ducks have 15 takeaways at home this season. It was the fifth game of the season with at least three takeaways.

"Being in the secondary against Washington State, you know they're going to pass the ball," McKinley said. "We were prepared."

Cristobal said: "I'll tell you what, it was seven nothing and Verone gets up pick. That was another huge bolt of energy to our sideline our offensive guys fed off of that big time. And that's what Verone does. Verone's a game changer."

## Up next

Washington State: Hosts Arizona on Friday night, Nov. 19.

Oregon: Visits Utah next Saturday, Nov. 20.



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