

Utah ends Ducks' playoff hopes

By JOHN COON

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah ended Oregon's College Football Playoff hopes in dominant fashion. The Ducks' 38-7 loss Saturday night, Nov. 20 also ended any chance the Pac-12 champion will claim one of the bids in the four-team playoff.

Neither Oregon nor Utah will finish high enough in the College Football Playoff rankings to earn a bid. It means that the Pac-12 will not send its champion to the playoff for a fourth consecutive season.

"It hurts because there were a lot of expectations," Oregon quarterback Anthony Brown said. "The potential was there, and we didn't maximize. We didn't grab the opportunity that was right in front of us."

The No. 4 Ducks never really had a chance against the Utes after No. 24 Utah

scored 14 points in the final 27 seconds before halftime to take a four-touchdown lead. Britain Covey returned a punt 78 yards for a touchdown on the final play of the first half.

"It really was a tough situation for them coming out and being down 28-0," Utes coach Kyle Whittingham said. "That was really the biggest portion of the game and the thing that really gave us a ton of momentum."

Tavion Thomas ran for 94 yards and three touchdowns to help the Utes (8-3, 7-1 Pac-12, No. 23 CFP) wrap up a share of the Pac-12 South title and a spot in the conference championship game. Utah won four in a row.

Thomas has run for a Utah-record 17 touchdowns this season. The previous mark was 15, shared by Zack Moss and John White IV.

Cameron Rising threw for 178 yards. His top target, Brant Kuithe, piled up 118 yards on five catches for just the second 100-yard game of his career. Covey had 191 all-purpose yards.

Utah converted 11 of 14 third downs and finished with 386 total yards.

Brown threw for 231 yards and a touchdown for Oregon (9-2, 6-2 Pac-12, No. 3 CFP). Oregon rushed for only 63 yards and had 294 yards of offense.

"Our biggest thing was just owning the line of scrimmage," Utah linebacker Devin Lloyd said. "We weren't going to try to switch up our scheme or do anything special."

The Ducks now face a must-win situation against Oregon State on Saturday, Nov. 27 to clinch the Pac-12 North title and guarantee a title

game rematch with Utah in two weeks.

"Everybody's upset and disappointed like we should be," Ducks coach Mario Cristobal said. "It should burn. It should hurt a ton. These guys are competitors and it's hard because we've taken a lot of pride in being resilient and being able to bounce back from adversity."

On its only scoring drive of the first quarter, Utah ran the ball 11 times on 13 plays — culminating in a burst up the middle for 10 yards from Thomas.

Rising found a rhythm on Utah's next scoring drive. He completed three straight passes to open the drive and capped it off by dancing across the goal line on a 1-yard run in the second quarter.

His biggest pass in the first half — a 49-yard catch

and run by Kuithe — set up a 4-yard scoring run by Thomas that put Utah ahead 21-0 with 27 seconds left in the half.

The Utes forced another Oregon punt 16 seconds later, and Covey returned it for the TD to make it 28-0.

Oregon finally got on the board in the third quarter when Devon Williams reeled in a 36-yard catch. Utah ended any possibility of a comeback when Thomas sprinted 5 yards for his third touchdown. Jadon Redding tacked on a 26-yard field goal to put the Utes up 38-7 midway through the fourth quarter.

The takeaway

Oregon: Aside from a 50-yard catch by Kris Hutson, the Ducks did hardly anything noteworthy against Utah's defense until the third quarter. Oregon's inability to move the

chains kept it off the board in the first half and ultimately crushed the Ducks' hopes of going to the College Football Playoff.

Utah: The Utes did practically everything right on offense in the first half. Utah converted 8 of 10 third downs and averaged 6.1 yards per play. As well as the Utes' offense played, the defense did an even better job of grounding the Ducks when it mattered.

Poll implications

Oregon will take a tumble in the latest AP Top 25 Poll and Utah should see a big jump.

Up next

Oregon: Hosts Oregon State on Saturday, Nov. 27.

Utah: Hosts Colorado on Friday, Nov. 26.

Lillard has season-high 39 points, Trail Blazers beat 76ers

By ERIK GARCÍA GUNDERSEN

Associated Press

PORTLAND — Damian Lillard scored a season-high 39 points to help the Portland Trail Blazers beat the Philadelphia 76ers 118-111 on Saturday night, Nov. 20.

The All-Star guard, fighting his way out of a slump early in the season, was 10 for 21 from the field and made all 14 free throws.

"He earned every single one of those 14 free throws tonight," Blazers coach Chauncey Billups said. "I think this is more what people are accustomed to seeing when he attacks, him getting double-figure free throws."

Lillard struggled with his shot to start the season, shooting career-lows across the board. But the six-time All-Star believes he is starting to round into form on the offensive end.

"I said it after we played Philly (Nov. 1): These moments give you an opportunity to rise. It shows your true character, whether you can deal with hard times and criticism," Lillard said. "The last five or six games, I'm starting to feel better and better. I still don't feel completely in form but I'm getting there."

CJ McCollum added 18 points, Norman Powell had 17, and Jusuf Nurkic finished with 11 points and 11 rebounds. Portland improved to 8-1 at home and, at 9-8, is above .500 for the first time since Oct. 31.

The Blazers closed the game with Larry Nance Jr. in place of Nurkic for the third straight game. After being subbed out for Nance with 4:23 remaining after committing two fouls seconds apart, Nurkic threw his mouthguard on the floor in frustration before Lillard spoke to him on the bench.

"Any time you get subbed out of the game late, there's going to be frustration," Lillard said. "It's happened a few times over this homestand if teams go small. I told him, 'I understand why you're upset.' I would be more curious if he wasn't upset. But I told him on both of those fouls that he got, if his man turns the corner, it's my job to be the help. He's got to trust that the low man is going to be there."

Said Billups: "If the big picks up two quick fouls, they're going to keep going to that, so I went back to Larry so we can switch 1 through 5. At the end of the day, I'm just trying to get the win however we can get it."

Tobias Harris and Tyrese Maxey each scored 28 points for Philadelphia. Joel Embiid missed his seventh straight game after entering the NBA's COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

Harris' layup cut the Blazers' lead to 97-95 at the 6:18 mark, but that was the closest the 76ers would get in the second half.

Boise State blanks New Mexico, 37-0

By JASON CHATRAW

Associated Press

BOISE — Khalil Shakir rolled up 192 all-purpose yards, George Holani rushed for 114 yards, and Boise State returned two blocked punts for touchdowns as the Broncos defeated New Mexico 37-0 Saturday night, Nov. 20.

Boise State (7-4, 5-2) keeps alive its slim hopes of winning the Mountain Division by virtue of Wyoming's 44-17 upset of Utah State on Saturday. However, the Broncos will still need some more help in the final week-end of the regular season to advance to the Mountain West title game.

A month ago, Boise State was 3-4 and struggling. Since then, the Broncos have

beaten two top 25 teams on the road and are surging.

"The guys have purpose, plain and simple," Boise State coach Andy Avalos said of his team's turnaround. "The commitment to how we're going to show up with a certain purpose every single day and how we're going to work for the team and how we're going to do it for the team, that's the bottom line."

"We've been able to develop some more players as a result of that, and we've been able to develop that dependable depth that we've been wanting for a long time."

New Mexico (3-8, 1-6) finished the game with Bryson Carroll — who was a student team manager just three weeks ago — at quarterback

after an injury knocked out starter Isaiah Chavez. The Lobos only mustered 101 yards of total offense in suffering its second shutout of the season.

"Obviously, offensively we're kind of a joke right now," New Mexico coach Danny Gonzales said. "You can't get a hundred yards of total offense in a game and have any chance to win, you can't average six points a game and have any chance to win, and you can't get two punts blocked. That's terrible. Offensively, we can't keep going down the path we're going, so we're going to have to fix it."

While the Boise State defense pitched its first shutout of the season, the

special teams stole the show on senior night.

On New Mexico's first punt of the game from its own 18, Kekaula Kaniho smothered punter Aaron Rodriguez's kick and Tyreque Jones scooped up the ball and returned the ball seven yards for a touchdown.

With Boise State ahead 10-0 early in the second quarter, Alexander Teubner blocked Rodriguez's punt and Dylan Herberg snatched the ball off the turf and rumbled six yards for the score.

The Broncos' offense didn't get into the end zone until the final play of the first half when Shakir raced past the New Mexico secondary and hauled in a 56-yard pass from Hank Bachmeier.

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

Sebastian Blanco scores twice, Timbers beat Minnesota, 3-1

By ANNE M. PETERSON

Associated Press

PORTLAND — Sebastian Blanco scored the go-ahead goal and added an insurance score and the Portland Timbers eliminated Minnesota United from the MLS playoffs with a 3-1 opening-round victory Sunday, Nov. 21.

The fourth-seeded Timbers advanced to play the top-seeded Rapids in Colorado on Thanksgiving Day.

"We feel relief. But we cannot relax. We congratulate everybody, but now we need to focus on Colorado," Blanco said. "They have a very, very good team at home. Very strong. We have

only four days to prepare for that game. So we focus now on the next game."

Minnesota goalkeeper Tyler Miller was held out of the match after testing positive for COVID-19. He announced his test results on Twitter just before kickoff.

"Unfortunately I've tested positive for Covid. Gutted to not be there with the boys in Portland but all the confidence they can get the job done, and I'll be back soon as possible," he wrote.

Dayne St. Clair started in Miller's place.

Larrys Mabilia also scored for Portland. Franco Frag-

apane opened the scoring for Minnesota.

The Timbers set a club record with 17 wins this season and won three straight heading into the postseason.

The fifth-seeded Loons needed a tie or win over the LA Galaxy on Decision Day to make the playoffs, ultimately earning the spot with a 3-3 draw.

Minnesota won both games against the Timbers this season, extending a seven-match unbeaten streak in the series. Portland hadn't beaten the Loons since 2018.

United took the early lead on Fraganpe's left-footed

knock into the corner of the net, shot from very close range to the bottom left corner.

The Timbers pulled even on a header from Mabilia off a corner in the 43rd minute. It was his first goal of the season.

Portland took the lead just moments into the second half when Sebastian Blanco scored from just inside the box. Blanco had taken a hard hit at the end of the opening half and was grasping at his right side following the goal.

Blanco remained in the match and scored his second from distance in the 66th minute.



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