

The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, Oregon)

September 9, 2007 Sunday  
Sunrise Edition

## When 'I want to go to Oregon' says it all

**BYLINE:** John Canzano, The Oregonian

ANN ARBOR, Mich. -- As part of their unofficial visit, three prized Michigan football recruits received a campus tour, a free lunch and special necklaces that had each of their names printed on them.

Oregon beat Michigan 39-7 on Saturday.

But before that, Wolverines head coach Lloyd Carr could have told you that Edwin Baker rushed for 210 yards the night before in his high school game in suburban Detroit, and that teammate Joevall Hoseay had 150 yards rushing. And that Antoine Mason, a 6-foot-2 receiver and defensive back, has 4.5 speed in the 40.

Carr shook their hands before the game.

Then Oregon shook their minds.

The Ducks ran, passed, blocked and tackled. Oregon's offense came within 21 yards of setting a stadium record for total offense. The Ducks' defense had four sacks and 14 tackles for losses.

Boos and jeers aside, it got so quiet in Michigan's home stadium Saturday you could have read a book or taken a nap or just lounged around somewhere between the 20s, enjoying the sunset with 109,733 fellow fans presumably meditating on Carr's spleen.

The Big House turned into The Big Mouse.

After the game, No. 1 booster Phil Knight, No. 2 booster and athletic director Pat Kilkenny and a host of other Ducks fans, including Harold Reynolds and Ahmad Rashad, slapped backs and celebrated. Ducks quarterback Dennis Dixon, who we're told threw up in the locker room at halftime, wiped his chin and did an interview on national television. And running back Jonathan Stewart told reporters he believes the Ducks can win a national championship.

Said Stewart: "I won't stop staying it."

A few feet away, a Michigan chaperone was trying to pry those recruits up the tunnel, out of the stadium and far away from all the Northwest propaganda. But the recruits didn't budge. They just stood, watching Oregon dance and listening to Stewart. And what did they think?

Said Hoseay: "I want to go to Oregon."

The other two recruits nodded.

Then Mason said he was considering more than stadium size and program history. Baker said he couldn't remember Michigan losing that badly. And then Timothy Hopkins, their high school coach who drove them the 45 miles from suburban Detroit to Ann Arbor for the visit, jotted down his telephone number and handed it to someone in lightning yellow and said, "Call me. I got players."

Oregon's victory came in too many ways to count Saturday.

Dixon finally won a big road game. Defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti, whose defense had given up 27 or more points in five consecutive games, coached a defense

that held Michigan to a single touchdown. Oregon, which had lost its past three nationally televised games by a combined score of 103-38, turned Michigan's season into a pinata.

But all that looked stump ugly next to those recruits.

There was no facet of Oregon's victory more integral to the future of the program than the look on the faces of those three Wolverines recruits as they wondered what it would be like to wear a Ducks uniform. Hoseay even looked down at his necklace and, eek, said, "They didn't even spell my name right."

Bad day for the Wolverines, I suppose.

Remember, there was a time that what Oregon had working for it when it came to recruiting against the top Bowl Championship Series conference members were groovy uniform combinations --384 of them. Compared with Michigan's 860 all-time victories, 11 national titles and a stadium that could hold the population of a lot of small U.S. cities, Oregon built its angle on fashion.

Now Bellotti's program has a 2-0 start and a victory over Michigan, the Ducks' second in a row against the Wolverines. And not lost here is that the 2007 Ducks not only beat Michigan, but did it on national television during a week everyone was focused on Michigan. And they did it in front of the largest crowd to ever see a UO football game, bigger than the 102,247 at the Rose Bowl on Jan. 2, 1995.

So is Michigan that bad? Or is Oregon that good?

The ESPN radio updates that went out across the country were done by a guy in the press box who hollered into the telephone in the third quarter: "Michigan's defense is making Oregon quarterback Dennis Dixon look like a Heisman candidate!" Which is only to say, as it should be in Week 2, the Ducks have work to do in the eyes of the country.

But not in the eyes of those recruits.

And I'm not sure much else matters right now.