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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**6** CJ VERDELL'S  
GOT NEXT

**8** THE CORE  
FOUR

**10** KEEP AN EYE ON  
THESE GUYS

**11** A FIGHT UP  
FRONT

**12** OVERCOMING  
INJURY

**14** AUBURN - A FIRST  
SINCE 2011

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# GAMEDAY

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Oregon Ducks football plays in the Spring Game at Autzen Stadium.  
(Maddie Knight/Emerald)

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# OREGON VS. AUBURN



## OREGON OFFENSE

PLAYER	#	POS	YR
Penei Sewell	No. 58	LT	So.
Shane Lemieux	No. 68	LG	Sr.
Jake Hanson	No. 55	C	Sr.
Dallas Warmack	No. 75	RG	Sr.
Calvin Throckmorton	No. 54	RT	Sr.
Jacob Breeland	No. 27	TE	Sr.
Juwan Johnson	No. 6	WR	Sr.
Jaylon Redd	No. 30	WR	Jr.
Johnny Johnson III	No. 3	WR	Jr.
CJ Verdell	No. 7	RB	So.
Justin Herbert	No. 10	QB	Sr.

## AUBURN OFFENSE

PLAYER	#	POS	YR
Prince Tega Wanogho	No. 76	LT	Sr.
Marquel Harrell	No. 77	LG	Sr.
Kaleb Kim	No. 54	C	Sr.
Mike Horton	No. 64	RG	Sr.
Jack Driscoll	No. 71	RT	Sr.
Spencer Nigh	No. 99	TE/HB	Sr.
Sal Cannella	No. 80	WR	Sr.
Eli Stove	No. 12	WR	Jr.
Will Hastings	No. 33	WR	Sr.
Jatarvious Whitlow	No. 28	RB	So.
Bo Nix	No. 10	QB	Fr.

## OREGON DEFENSE

PLAYER	#	POS	YR
Gus Cumberlander	No. 45	DE	Sr.
Jordon Scott	No. 34	NT	Jr.
Austin Faoliu	No. 99	DT	Jr.
Bryson Young	No. 56	STUD	Sr.
Isaac Slade-Matautia	No. 41	MLB	So.
Troy Dye	No. 35	WILL	Sr.
La'Mar Winston Jr.	No. 32	SAM	Sr.
Thomas Graham Jr.	No. 4	CB	Jr.
Deommodore Lenoir	No. 6	CB	Jr.
Jevon Holland	No. 8	S	So.
Brady Breeze	No. 25	S	Jr.

## AUBURN DEFENSE

PLAYER	#	POS	YR
T.D. Moultry	No. 55	BUCK	Jr.
Derrick Brown	No. 5	DT	Sr.
Tyrone Truesdell	No. 94	DT	Jr.
Marlon Davidson	No. 3	DE	Sr.
Owen Pappoe	No. 10	LB	Fr.
K.J. Britt	No. 33	LB	Jr.
Christan Tutt	No. 6	STAR	So.
Noah Igbinoghene	No. 4	CB	Jr.
Javaris Davis	No. 13	CB	Sr.
Jeremiah Dinson	No. 20	S	Sr.
Daniel Thomas	No. 24	S	Sr.

## OREGON SPECIAL TEAMS

PLAYER	#	POS	YR
Karsten Battles	No. 63	LS	So.
Blake Maimone	No. 42	P	Sr.
Adam Stack	No. 96	PK	Jr.

## AUBURN SPECIAL TEAMS

PLAYER	#	POS	YR
Bill Taylor	No. 60	LS	So.
Arryn Siposs	No. 90	P	Jr.
Anders Carlson	No. 26	PK	So.

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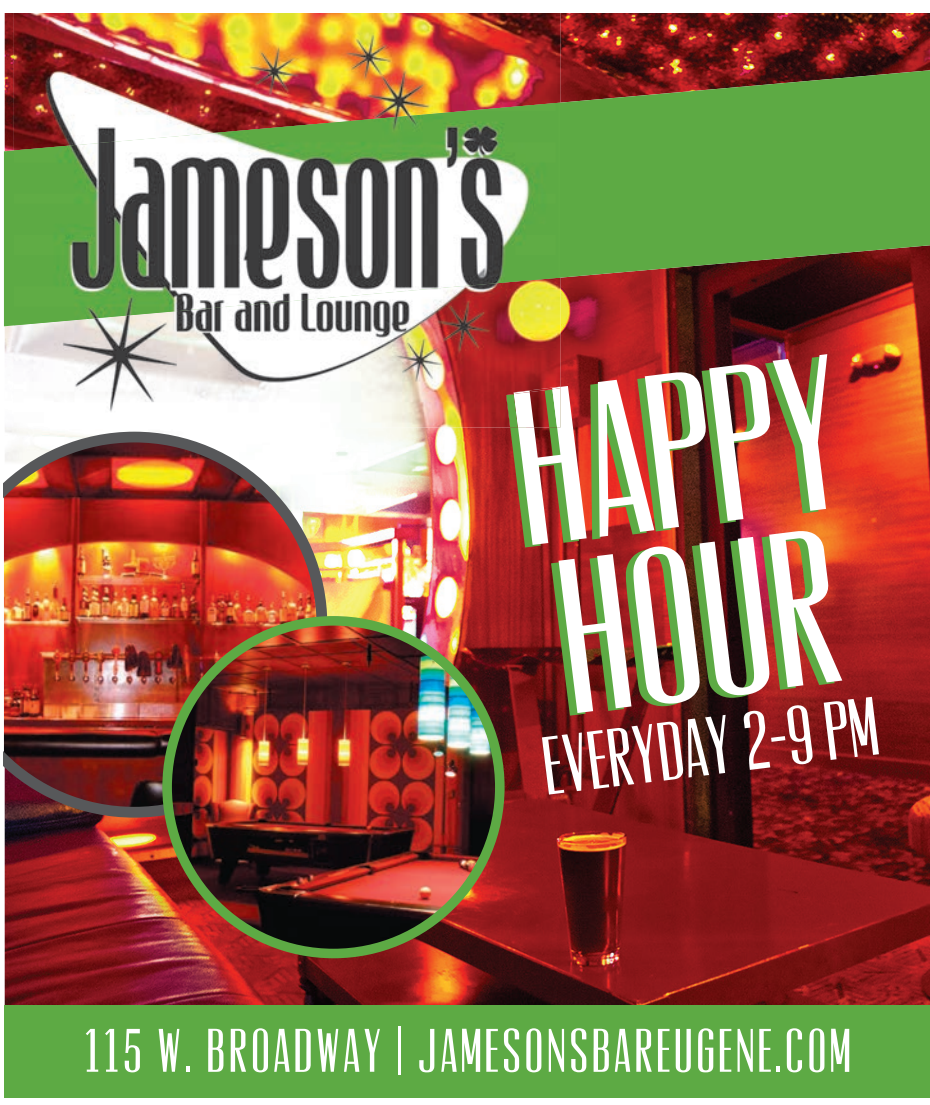
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# CJ VERDELL

## COULD BE SAN DIEGO'S NEXT STAR

BY: **Brady Lim**



*Ducks running back CJ Verdell tries to find a hole in the Husky defense to run through. (Ben Green/Emerald)*

CJ Verdell became the only Power-5 player in the nation to post 1,000 yards rushing and 300 yards receiving in 2018. He did that as a freshman.

Now running behind one of the country's top offensive lines as a sophomore, Verdell has a chance to join the ranks of some of the best running backs college football has ever seen. And they all happen to share the same hometown: San Diego.

San Diego has produced four Heisman Trophy winners, all of

them running backs: Marcus Allen, Rashaan Salaam, Ricky Williams and Reggie Bush. On top of that, Allen and Terrell Davis both won Super Bowl MVP honors representing San Diego – not to mention Oregon Ducks all-time leading rusher Royce Freeman.

Verdell is certainly aware of the rich history in the city, and is aiming to be up there with those greats one day.

“San Diego’s got that legacy of running backs,” Verdell said. “To be seen as one of those guys – as one

of the top running backs to make it out of San Diego – it would definitely be an honor to me. Those are big names.”

He didn’t have to look far to find inspiration at the professional level while growing up in San Diego. Pro Football Hall of Famer LaDainian Tomlinson was carving up NFL defenses for the Chargers every Sunday just as Verdell’s own football career was beginning to blossom.

“LT was my favorite running back growing up,” Verdell said. “Watching the way he ran, his balance, how he

set up defenders...I used to study him, man. I used to watch him like nobody’s business.”

But it’s now 2019, and Tomlinson’s career has been over for eight years. Instead of looking to other running backs for inspiration, Verdell is now the guy that young backs are looking to for guidance. And Verdell recognizes that leadership responsibility as the next step in his development as a player.

“I took it upon myself, me and Travis [Dye] both, to take control of that room and just make sure



everybody's in line and knows what they're supposed to do," Verdell said. "At the end of the day, that's a reflection of us. If those young guys aren't up to par and aren't picking up on stuff, it's just gonna come right back to us."

Despite being just a redshirt sophomore, he's the most experienced running back on the roster and wants to leave a legacy on the Oregon program long after he's gone, just as Royce Freeman did for him in 2017.

"We have player-led meetings with me and Trav, or me and Cyrus [Habibi-Likio], all the time," Verdell

“

**TO BE SEEN AS ONE OF THOSE GUYS – AS ONE OF THE TOP RUNNING BACKS TO MAKE IT OUT OF SAN DIEGO – IT WOULD DEFINITELY BE AN HONOR”**

CJ VERDELL

said. "The older guys will lead the meeting and the younger guys will ask questions and make sure they're comprehending what's being taught to them."

He talked about how good players put up numbers, but great players put up numbers while being leaders at the same time. Verdell has already done the former, and he plans to do the latter in 2019 as the Ducks look to win the Pac-12 for the first time since 2014.

If he can accomplish those two goals, he may just be able to accomplish one more in the process: being mentioned alongside some of San Diego's greatest running backs.



Ducks running back CJ Verdell celebrates a touchdown. (Sarah Northrop/Emerald)

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# OREGON'S O-LINE HAS BEEN FORGING A BOND STRONGER THAN FOOTBALL

BY: Gabe Ornelas @gabe\_ornelas



The Oregon offensive line at play  
(Sarah Northrop/Emerald)

**“FIVE YEARS. I DON’T KNOW WHERE THE TIME HAS GONE. IT’S ALL BEEN A BLUR.”**

**BRADY AIELLO**

Everybody has a quirk that makes them unique.

Penei Sewell still acts like a kid. Shane Lemieux is a meathead. Jake Hanson hates to get his feet stepped on. Dallas Warmack is a pretty boy. Calvin Throckmorton is super smart. And Brady Aiello is the comedian.

For the last four years, Oregon’s offensive linemen have learned each other’s idiosyncrasies. Lemieux, Hanson, Throckmorton and Aiello grew from freshmen competing for a starting position to teammates with an inseparable bond that has been built over five seasons. Warmack and Sewell both joined the group last year. Despite being new, the others welcomed them into their brotherhood.

This experienced offensive line has its sights set on lofty expectations this year. They will need to

anchor the offense if they want to accomplish the goals they’ve set out to achieve.

One of the deepest positions on the Ducks’ depth chart also happens to be the most veteran one, but this season is the final go around for the seniors.

“The synergy in that group – nothing will come between them,” offensive line coach Alex Mirabal said. “They did not allow the competition to come between the brotherhood that they have. They are character kids. ... They are good human beings.”

The competition for a starting spot on Oregon’s O-line began in 2015 when Lemieux, Hanson, Throckmorton and Aiello were introduced to one another.

“The first moment ever was kinda awkward,” Lemieux said. “We were

all freshmen coming in so we were all kind of competitive at the same time with each other. After a while that rubbed off and we became friends.”

The four, who all lived together their freshman year, were brought together by former offensive line coach Steve Greatwood. Greatwood served as Oregon’s offensive line coach for 25 years, but was part of a mass exodus following the firing of former head coach Mark Helfrich in 2016.

The group’s bond was tested following the Greatwood’s departure. Instead of disbanding, the offensive line class of 2015 stuck together.

“When I first came here, I came here for coach Greatwood,” Lemieux said. “When he left, our class stuck together and became really close. Going through all the hard times together built our relationships.

“Jake and Brady and all those guys were my best friends – I couldn’t leave them. That’s more than football. Those guys will be around forever.”

Willie Taggart became next head coach in 2017 and was tasked with filling a void that was stable for 25 seasons. Taggart brought in now-head coach Mario Cristobal, who was the offensive line coach at Alabama from 2013 to 2016.

Cristobal only spent one season as the offensive line coach before another dramatic change. Taggart, after just one season at Oregon, departed for Florida State, leaving the head coaching position open yet again.

Many of the players, including the offensive line, lobbied for Cristobal to become the team’s head coach. The players got what they asked for, and the offensive line already knew what



they had was special.

"The growth has been huge as an offensive line unit and the team as a whole," Hanson said. "The biggest thing is the culture of the program. Coach Cristobal has put an emphasis on physicality and power up front on the offensive and defensive line.

"I think that has been the missing piece in the past, so I think the culture that he has instilled is going to be one that can make us a year in, year out championship contender."

The offensive line not only welcomed Cristobal as its head coach but also Sewell and Warmack to the offensive line unit.

Sewell, the No. 2 offensive guard in the nation coming out of high school, was able to make an impact in his freshman year but also learned from the veterans. Despite missing six games due to an injury, he made USA Today's Freshman All-American team along with 247Sports True Freshman All-American team.

"I'm just so happy and grateful to be playing with four redshirt seniors and the experience that they have. It's really all I could ask for," Sewell said. "Knowing that they have the

experience, I can lean on them and ask them anything."

Sewell's freshman year was more than just relishing in the moment of getting to play along four veterans. It was also about learning how to lead an offensive line group for years to come.

"Teaching Penei the way that we were taught to be great leaders and how to be great offensive linemen," Lemieux said. "Three years from now, if he stays that long, we can come back and see him be the leader of his offensive line."

Warmack, despite being new to Oregon, brought plenty of experience to the team from his time at Alabama. Warmack played in 16 games during his three-year tenure at Alabama. He was not coming in just to be in a new environment, but to fight for a starting position.

"When Warmack came here, the way that they embraced him, they didn't feel him as an outsider. They felt him as a brother that was coming into play," Mirabal said. "They openly embraced him; it's just the way they are as people."

Warmack came into 2018 and

started all 12 regular-season games for the Ducks, but is still competing for a starting spot up until game day with Aiello. There is no animosity between the two and Warmack has been loving his time in Eugene, he said.

"It's a blessing," Warmack said. "Those guys being veterans and learning from each other, it's been a blessing and I love every single day."

Now as the seniors head into their final season together, they've tried to relish the moments they've spent on the field together and the moments off of it. The core four have not only been able to grow as football players, but as men together.

"Five years. I don't know where the time has gone. It's all been a blur," Aiello said. "It's amazing, we've built a really good chemistry as being really good friends off the field. Not many guys stick out all five years. Playing with the same four has been awesome."

Now the six offensive linemen want to show the country what has been culminating over the last five seasons. They collectively want to win the Joe Moore award, which

is given to the most outstanding offensive line unit in the country. This group will have a real chance at achieving that goal. They are returning all five starters and has been tabbed as one of the best lines in the county.

On top of the Joe Moore award, they have their sights set on the Pac-12 Championship and the National Championship.

Despite their individual personality traits, they are ready as a group to come together for one last season. They will get a chance to show the nation what has been building over the last five years against No. 16 Auburn in primetime. The Tigers boast one of the best defensive lines in the country, but this veteran offensive line unit is ready so show why they are one of the best units in the county.

"It's really important that we all understand that this team and our unit hasn't done anything this year," Throckmorton said. "We're all really excited to put our heads down and go to work to go out and achieve everything that we want to achieve this season."

Oregon offensive lineman Shane Lemieux (68) at a practice. (Marissa Willke/Emerald)



The Oregon offensive line prepare for the start of the game. (Devin Roux/Emerald)





# PLAYERS TO WATCH

BY: **Shane Hoffman** @shane\_hoffman



## Auburn

### QUARTERBACK: BO NIX

After an ongoing quarterback battle between true freshman Bo Nix and redshirt freshman Joey Gatewood, Auburn head coach Gus Malzahn named Nix the starter. Auburn possesses a talented and balanced roster, with the biggest question mark being the signal caller. The success of the former No. 1 overall dual-threat quarterback will make or break Auburn in 2019. Nix's first taste of college football will come in prime time against a top-15 team, a position which, for better or worse, could catapult him into the national college football discourse for weeks to come. To succeed, his offensive line must give him good protection. Additionally, he will need to make quick decisions and use his scrambling ability to deal with the onslaught of pressure Avalos will most likely bring.

### DEFENSIVE LINEMAN: DERRICK BROWN

Senior Derrick Brown was expected by many to go pro last season. Instead, he decided to return for one final year. In 2018-19, he started at defensive tackle for all 13 of Auburn's games. He went on to finish the year with 48 total tackles, including 10.5 for loss and 4.5 sacks, earning him a second-team All-SEC selection. Brown utilizes incredible strength on the inside, which shows up in both his disruptive pass rush as well as his run-stuffing ability. Despite his strength and size, it's his deceptive speed that makes him an effective player and someone who could give Oregon's talented offensive line trouble up front.

## Oregon

### RECEIVER: JUWAN JOHNSON

Even before fellow receivers Brenden Schooler and Mycah Pittman fell to injuries, Juwan Johnson – a transfer from Penn State – was expected to not only produce, but perhaps even be the Ducks' go-to wideout. Now, a depleted receiving corps' success all but hinges on Johnson. His 6'4" frame should allow him to play in the slot, but more importantly on the outside. This versatility, combined with his catch radius, will be key if Oregon hopes to put up points against a talented Auburn defense.

### INSIDE LINEBACKER: ISAAC SLADE-MATAUTIA

After redshirting in 2017, Isaac Slade-Matautia was set to be a contributor in a talented linebacking corps in 2018. And for the most part he was, racking up 20 total tackles in the first five games. However, injuries hampered him; he did not appear in another game that season. Entering the 2019 season, much has been made about the linebacker group, as it looks to be not only deeper, but, in some aspects, even more talented than years prior. Given the depth, a variety of names have been mentioned as potential starters and/or contributors, none more consistently than Slade-Matautia. At 6'1" and 235 lbs, the Honolulu native's combination of speed and power could be just what Andy Avalos' defense needs patrolling the middle of the field. Look for him to be active not only in the run game, but dropping back into coverage as well.





# BATTLE IN THE TRENCHES

The Oregon Ducks face off at the Spring Game. (Ben Green/Emerald)



BY: **Shane Hoffman** @shane\_hoffman | PHOTO: **Ben Green**

Since head coach Mario Cristobal took over two years ago, he has had three goals. Two of them shouldn't surprise anyone coming from a new head coach — he wants to rebuild the Oregon brand and develop strong relationships and accountability between players, coaches, and alumni. But Cristobal hopes most of all to recruit and develop his team both mentally and physically so that they can compete with teams from the south.

“The DNA of the program has to ooze out of everybody that's in the building,” Cristobal told ESPN in May. “It has to feel different when you walk through the door.”

Having previously coached at Alabama under Nick Saban, Cristobal knows what it takes to be a high-level program. He would like nothing more than for Oregon to become the class of the Pac-12 again and give the conference a new national outlook. For the Ducks, this starts with preparation and becoming a “fourth quarter program.”

“We feel like we've trained the hardest in the Pac-12,” senior guard Shane Lemeiux told ESPN. “You think about all the stuff that you've done in the

past and how much more mentally and physically stronger you are and how much more you're going to dominate [them].”

Cristobal has had time to get his feet under him, time to instill his styles, his beliefs and most of all begin to recruit his type of players. The season opener against SEC powerhouse Auburn is the perfect opportunity for Cristobal and his Ducks to show the world the progress they've made.

Like any good coach, he understands the importance of the lines on both sides and knows that to build a team capable of competing with anyone across the nation, it must start in the trenches.

Next Saturday, two of the best lines in the nation will face off as Oregon's deep and experienced offensive line will face Auburn's perennially explosive defensive line.

“It's hard to replicate the physicality they play with up front,” offensive line coach Alex Mirabel said. “It's hard to replicate the size they got.”

Oregon's group (from left to right) starts at tackle with sophomore Penei Sewell who missed six games due to an ankle injury during the back half of the

season. While on the field, however, he was one of the better tackles in the nation as Oregon went 6-1 in his presence. To his right is senior Shane Lemeiux, who was recently named a preseason All-American by the Associated Press. In the middle sits Jake Hanson, who has started every game for the last three seasons. At the other guard spot is former Alabama transfer Dallas Warmack followed by another preseason All-American in senior tackle Calvin Throckmorton.

For Auburn, it starts in the middle with NFL prospect Derrick Brown, whose combo of strength and speed help contribute to the lines versatility. Next to Brown is first-time starter, junior nose tackle Tryone Truesdell. On the outside, three year starter Marlon Davidson and edge rusher Nick Coe who recorded 13.5 tackles for loss and 7.0 sacks last season will put pressure on Justin Herbert.

“Good players playing good players,” Mirabel said of the Auburn defensive line. “Our guys have a tremendous amount of respect for them, for what they see on film, and it's going to be an honor for us to be on the field with them.”



# AFTER INJURY SETBACKS,

## DUCKS LOOK FOR A BREAKOUT WIDE RECEIVER AGAINST AUBURN

BY: **Oscar Duyck** | PHOTOS: **Henry Ward**

Former standout receiver Dillion Mitchell is now a member of the Minnesota Vikings, and Oregon finds itself with a question mark at wide receiver. Playing with a probable NFL quarterback like Justin Herbert, opportunities are abundant for receivers to increase their targets.

The 2019 receiving corps is an eclectic mix of returning players, veteran transfers and promising freshman recruits. However, the unit as a whole has dealt with a number of injuries, including senior Brenden Schooler and top freshman Mycah Pittman likely missing the opening weeks of the season. Juwan Johnson is dealing with injury concerns that could affect his availability, too. Oregon will have to rely on its depth at receiver.

“We’re very confident in our group and what we have in place right now,” wide receiver coach Jovon Bouknight said.

Among the veteran Oregon receivers, Schooler, Johnny Johnson II and Jaylon Redd are clear-cut candidates to up their production. Schooler caught 21 passes in 2018 for a total of 203 yards and one touchdown. He was also All-Pac-12 special teams in 2018, but injured his foot earlier in August and is expected to miss six to eight weeks.

Once healthy, he will be a vital part of the offense.

“When we see Schooler go down, we got to step up and be the guys for him,” Juwan Johnson said.

The junior Johnson had 17 receptions for 215

yards and four touchdowns in 2018.

Jaylon Redd had a strong 2018 season, finishing with 38 catches for 433 yards and five touchdowns – the second most on the team. He has taken a leadership role on the team: “I have had some leaders over my time being here and I know what it takes,” Redd said.

With the injuries that have depleted this unit, Johnson will have to be at the top of his game against Auburn. “There is no anxiety – we’re just ready to play and give it our all,” Johnson said.

The injury to Pittman’s shoulder could limit the receiving corps’ potential. Pittman was a four-star recruit and a consensus top-150 player in the class. His injury could rob him of half his season.

Head coach Mario Cristobal released a



*Oregon Ducks wide receiver Johnny Johnson (3) carries the ball. (Henry Ward/Emerald)*



statement about Pittman on August 19th: “Mycah suffered an injury while making a diving catch during Saturday’s scrimmage that will result in him missing the start of the 2019 season. He is a relentless competitor that will come back stronger and be ready to compete this season.”

If Juwan Johnson can suit up against Auburn, he will have game-changing potential. The graduate transfer from Penn State had 25 catches for 325 yards and a touchdown in 2018. Johnson had over 1,000 career receiving yards for the Nittany Lions.

Injuries are shaking up the depth chart and giving young

receivers chances to make an impact in week one. This group includes redshirt freshmen Bryan Addison and JJ Tucker, and true freshman Josh Delgado.

To further add to the challenge, Auburn has one of the nation’s most talented defenses. The team allowed only 19.2 points per game in 2018, and they have a veteran secondary.

“The secondary, they’re all back but one, and really it’s senior leaders back there, so [we’re] feeling really good about our defense,”

Auburn head coach Gus Malzahn said.

The Oregon receivers will face their first test on Aug. 31 against Auburn in Arlington, Texas.

**“WHEN WE SEE SCHOOLER GO DOWN, WE GOT TO STEP UP AND BE THE GUYS FOR HIM.”**

JUWAN JOHNSON



Wide receiver Jaylon Redd celebrates scoring the game’s first touchdown. (Henry Ward/Emerald)



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# DEEP DIVE INTO AUBURN

BY: **Brady Lim** | PHOTO: **Ben Green**



*The Oregon Ducks warm up for the Spring Game. (Ben Green/Emerald)*

**I**t'll be the Ducks and Tigers for the second time ever on Saturday in Arlington, Texas in the 2019 Advocare Classic – a game in which Auburn is favored by 3.5 points.

As you might remember, the last time Auburn faced Oregon was in the 2011 BCS National Championship Game, where a late field goal propelled the Tigers to a 22-19 victory and a national title to go with it.

Now, seven and a half years later, the Tigers boast another extremely talented defense, perhaps the best one that Oregon senior quarterback Justin Herbert has ever seen. The defensive line alone has three potential first-round NFL Draft picks in Derrick Brown, Marlon Davidson and Nick Coe. The Auburn defense allowed just 3.7 yards per carry in 2018.

“Tremendous amount of respect for Auburn and the way they do things,” Oregon head coach Mario Cristobal said. “I’ve had the opportunity to watch them play, being an assistant coach and playing against them. They’re as physical and impressive as you can see.”

While the experienced Oregon offensive line battling with the experienced Auburn defensive line may be the marquee storyline, the Tigers have talent everywhere on defense, most notably with returning safeties Jeremiah Dinson and Daniel Thomas.

“The physicality of their corners, the physicality of their safeties, the speed and explosiveness of their linebackers,” Cristobal said of the defensive talent all over the field for Auburn. “There are so many battles.”

Offensively, Bo Nix will become the first true freshman quarterback

to start a season opener for Auburn since 1946, and the first in the SEC since 2004.

What Nix may lack in experience, however, he makes up for in pure talent. He was rated as a five-star prospect by every recruiting service coming out of Pinson Valley High School in Pinson, Alabama, and is fresh off winning Mr. Football in the state of Alabama in 2018. On top of that, he holds state records in both total yards and touchdowns, and won two state titles in his high-school career.

“He’s a very talented football player,” Cristobal said of Nix. “Whenever you name a starting quarterback, it means you have full confidence in that young man.”

On Auburn’s offensive line, all five starters will be seniors and they will boast over 100 career starts of experience as a unit.

Sophomore JaTarvious Whitlow will be the lead running back, with Kam Martin and Shaun Shivers figuring to mix in as well.

Much like Oregon, there are a lot of question marks on the outside. Their top wideout, Anthony Schwartz, broke his hand in fall camp and is listed as a game-time decision. Eli Stove and Will Hastings were both dealing with injuries of their own throughout camp, but they appear to be good to go for the opener. Seth Williams should factor into the passing game as well, but much of the receiving corps rotation is still in flux.

“Our guys have watched film,” Cristobal said. “They understand that this is a great football team, and that games like this always require every ounce of everything you have.”



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# DUCK FEST

EMERALD MEDIA GROUP

Emerald Media Group wants to kick off the term with a party for all the ducks! Meet awesome student groups, eat free food, and play games to win prizes! Support your independent student media and celebrate the new year with Duck Fest!

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**October 9th**  
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[dailyemerald.com/duckfest](http://dailyemerald.com/duckfest)

