

Herbert leads No. 7 Ducks past USC 56-24 to 8th straight win

LOS ANGELES -- Oregon's defense began the game by giving up a 16-play touchdown drive. Justin Herbert then threw only his second interception since last November.

The Ducks had barely survived back-to-back close games in the previous two weeks, and their winning streak appeared to be in peril again when they fell 10 points behind Southern California after the first quarter.

A calming little chat on the Coliseum sideline kept Oregon firmly on track in the College Football Playoff race with another blow-out win.

Herbert passed for 225 yards and threw three touchdown passes to Juwan Johnson in the second half, and No. 7 Oregon recovered from a slow start to cruise to its eighth consecutive victory, 56-24 over USC on Saturday night.

Oregon (8-1, 6-0 Pac-12) obliterated that early deficit by scoring a touchdown after each of four turnovers by USC freshman quarterback Kedon Slovis during a 19-minute stretch spanning halftime. Freshman Mykael Wright also returned a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown shortly after Brady Breeze returned an interception 32 yards for a score late in the second quarter.

But the Ducks looked shaky in the opening quarter until they settled down and got to work.

"We just looked at each other," Herbert said. "We knew that we're a special group, and we just needed to calm down and say, 'This isn't us. We're going to do better.' And we addressed that and got to move the ball pretty well. We knew we were better than that. We just had to fix things."

Herbert and receiver Jaylon Redd rushed for touchdowns in the first half for Oregon, which remained on track for the Pac-12 North title and a good shot at a playoff spot.

Oregon coach Mario Cristobal claimed he won't pay much attention to the first playoff rankings, but he has opinions.

"Without question, I feel we need to be in that conversation," Cristobal said. "And we need to keep getting better. ... We started a little bit slow. But once we got going, we really got going."

Herbert went 21 for 26 despite that ugly early interception, which was thrown straight to USC's Isaiah Pola-Mao. It ended Herbert's streak of 133 straight passes without a pick, the second-longest in the nation. Herbert had thrown just one interception in his previous 362 pass attempts in Pac-12 road games during his four-year career.

Oregon also committed 12 penalties for 157 yards and had two defensive players ejected, but racked up more than enough points to stay perfect since its season opener.

Slovis threw for 264 yards and three touchdowns on a USC-record 57 pass attempts, but his three interceptions and a fumble erased the Trojans' solid start. Slovis and Air Raid offensive coordinator Graham Harrell surpassed Todd Marinovich's single-game record of 55 attempts for the Trojans, set in 1989.

"You can't commit turnovers like that, but sometimes it happens," Slovis said. "You've just got to move on and play the next play." Michael Pittman Jr. and two-sport freshman Drake London caught first-half touchdown passes for USC (5-4, 4-2), which fell out of first place in the Pac-12 South with its third loss in five games. "We made enough mistakes tonight against a top-10 team," USC coach Clay Helton said. "You can't win a ballgame turning it over four times and have the penalties that we had and expect to beat that team. We just didn't execute like I know we can."

The Ducks finally got moving in the second quarter after Verone McKinley III intercepted a pass that ricocheted off London's hands. Pola-Mao was ejected for targeting during the ensuing drive, which ended with Herbert's 10-yard TD run, his first of the season.

Slovis then fumbled on a play from the Ducks 3 while trying to avoid a sack. Oregon responded with a 92-yard TD drive, and Breeze got his pick-6 moments later.

Pittman made a TD catch 20 seconds before halftime, but Wright responded with Oregon's first TD kickoff return since the 2017 season opener.

"They provided all the momentum," Cristobal said of the Ducks' two TD returns. "Those two plays took us into the locker room with a lot of juice and a lot of energy."

LATE SCORES

Pittman's younger brother, Oregon receiver Mycah Pittman, caught a TD pass from Tyler Shough with 6:50 to play.

Touted USC freshman Kyle Ford then made his first career catch for a 20-yard touchdown with 3:11 to play.

JUWAN'S GRABS

Johnson, the Ducks' senior Penn State transfer, had seven catches for 106 yards after making just six previous receptions all season.

"I don't know if Oregon has had a receiver like him in quite a while," Herbert said. "The way he runs and moves for a 6-5 guy is something special."

INJURIES

Herbert left the field slowly during the third quarter after taking a big hit in the thigh, but he returned just two plays later. "I knew that it wasn't anything bad, but it was just really painful," Herbert said.

THE TAKEAWAY

Oregon: The Ducks' defense and special teams responded splendidly to the early test with one big play after another. USC's shakiness was a credit to the Ducks' steadiness, and they'll need it during their finish against the Arizona schools and Oregon State before a probable trip to the Pac-12 championship game.

USC: The Trojans didn't have the toughness or the perseverance to pull off an upset, and Helton's five-year tenure could draw to a close this month if USC's new athletic director agrees with his demanding new fans. Despite it all, the Trojans are just one game off the Pac-12 South lead, but would need help from Utah's remaining three opponents.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
ORE	0	28	14	14	56
USC	10	7	0	7	24

Scoring Summary -----

	ORE	USC
FIRST QUARTER		
USC TD 9:15 Drake London 8 Yd pass from Kedon Slovis (Chase McGrath Kick)		
16 plays, 77 yards, 5:45	0	7
USC FG 3:00 Chase McGrath 24 Yd Field Goal		
4 plays, 2 yards, 0:55	0	10
SECOND QUARTER		
ORE TD 10:11 Justin Herbert 10 Yd Run (Camden Lewis Kick)		
6 plays, 59 yards, 2:14	7	10
ORE TD 2:36 Jaylon Redd 2 Yd Run (Camden Lewis Kick)		
9 plays, 92 yards, 3:06	14	10
ORE TD 2:16 Brady Breeze 32 Yd Interception Return (Camden Lewis Kick)		
2 plays, 0 yards, 0:20	21	10
USC TD 0:20 Michael Pittman Jr. 13 Yd pass from Kedon Slovis (Chase McGrath Kick)		
9 plays, 74 yards, 1:56	21	17
ORE TD 0:08 Mykael Wright 100 Yd Kickoff Return (Camden Lewis Kick)		
0 plays, 0 yards, 0:12	28	17
THIRD QUARTER		
ORE TD 11:39 Juwan Johnson 15 Yd pass from Justin Herbert (Camden Lewis Kick)		
7 plays, 80 yards, 3:21	35	17
ORE TD 6:14 Juwan Johnson 11 Yd pass from Justin Herbert (Camden Lewis Kick)		
6 plays, 34 yards, 2:26	42	17
FOURTH QUARTER		
ORE TD 13:55 Juwan Johnson 37 Yd pass from Justin Herbert (Camden Lewis Kick)		
9 plays, 92 yards, 4:14	49	17
ORE TD 6:50 Mycah Pittman 35 Yd pass from Tyler Shough (Camden Lewis Kick)		
9 plays, 91 yards, 5:05	56	17
USC TD 3:11 Kyle Ford 20 Yd pass from Kedon Slovis (Chase McGrath Kick)		
7 plays, 75 yards, 3:39	56	24

Team Stats	ORE	USC
First Downs	30	31
Passes for First	14	16
Rushes for First	9	6
Penalties for First	7	9
Third Down Efficiency	6-9	9-16
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-1
Total Yards	405	355
Total Plays	63	82
Avg Gain Per Play	6.4	4.3
Net Yards Rushing	139	91
Rushes	34	25
Yards Per Rush	4.1	3.6
Net Yards Passing	266	264
Comp-Att	23-29	32-57
Yards Per Pass	9.2	4.6
Times Sacked	2	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	-16	-12
Interceptions	1	3
Punts	2	3
Punt Average	47.5	36.3
Penalties	12	8
Penalty Yards	157	92
Fumbles	0	3
Fumbles Lost	0	1
Time of Poss	28:47	31:13

Individual Stats

RUSHING					
OREGON	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Travis Dye	12	75	6.3	0	16
Darriian Felix	10	43	4.3	0	11
CJ Verdell	6	12	2.0	0	5
Justin Herbert	4	8	2.0	1	14
Jaylon Redd	1	2	2.0	1	2
Cyrus Habibi-Likio	1	-1	-1.0	0	0
USC	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Kenan Christon	15	79	5.3	0	16
Dominic Davis	2	15	7.5	0	11
Quincy Jountti	3	5	1.7	0	5
Amon-Ra St. Brown	1	2	2.0	0	2
Kedon Slovis	4	-10	-2.5	0	2

PASSING							
OREGON	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Justin Herbert	21	26	225	8.7	3	1	86.2
Tyler Shough	2	3	41	13.7	1	0	99.6
USC	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Kedon Slovis	32	57	264	4.6	3	3	51.2

RECEIVING					
OREGON	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Juwan Johnson	7	106	15.1	3	37
Mycah Pittman	3	36	12.0	1	35
Jaylon Redd	4	31	7.8	0	19
Darriian Felix	2	30	15.0	0	27
Spencer Webb	2	19	9.5	0	13
Josh Delgado	1	14	14.0	0	14
Travis Dye	2	11	5.5	0	9
Hunter Kampmoyer	1	9	9.0	0	9
Daewood Davis	1	6	6.0	0	6
CJ Verdell	0	4	0.0	0	4
USC	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Tyler Vaughns	8	75	9.4	0	19
Amon-Ra St. Brown	7	61	8.7	0	19
Drake London	4	51	12.8	1	19
Michael Pittman Jr.	8	37	4.6	1	13
Kyle Ford	1	20	20.0	1	20
Velus Jones Jr.	2	12	6.0	0	7
Kenan Christon	1	5	5.0	0	5
Erik Krommenhoek	1	3	3.0	0	3