

Kemp shines on and off field

By Paul Morgan
Emerald Emerald Sports Reporter

Oregon free safety Steve Kemp has a goal in life. It's not to play in the NFL or go to the Super Bowl, although those would be acceptable alternatives.

He wants to help people — kids in particular. He wants to help disadvantaged kids find solace and direction in lives that are sometimes shattered by poverty, divorce, and abuse.

Kemp has worked as a peer adviser at the University, and as a counselor in the San Francisco area for Social Services.

He decided to go into the counseling field because of the satisfaction and challenge of those jobs, but for now he is spending most of his time helping the Oregon football team.

The 23-year-old American Studies major starts in the Oregon's "Hawk" formation, used on passing downs when the Ducks use extra defensive backs, and has roamed the field this year, corraling three interceptions, and knocking down six passes.

Last weekend against Arizona State, Kemp picked off a pass from Bret Powers late in the game and took it 81 yards for a touchdown. It was the first time an Oregon player had returned an interception for a touchdown since Rory Dairy did it in 1988, and it was the play that sealed Oregon's 27-7 victory.

As a fifth-year senior, Kemp has experience on defense the Ducks need, experience that puts him in the right place to grab interceptions and make plays.

Oregon defensive coordinator Denny Schuler said that experience was the key to Kemp's interception last weekend.

"A less experienced player would not have reacted as quickly," he said. "I've always taught kids to look elsewhere for plays, so he saw the quarter-

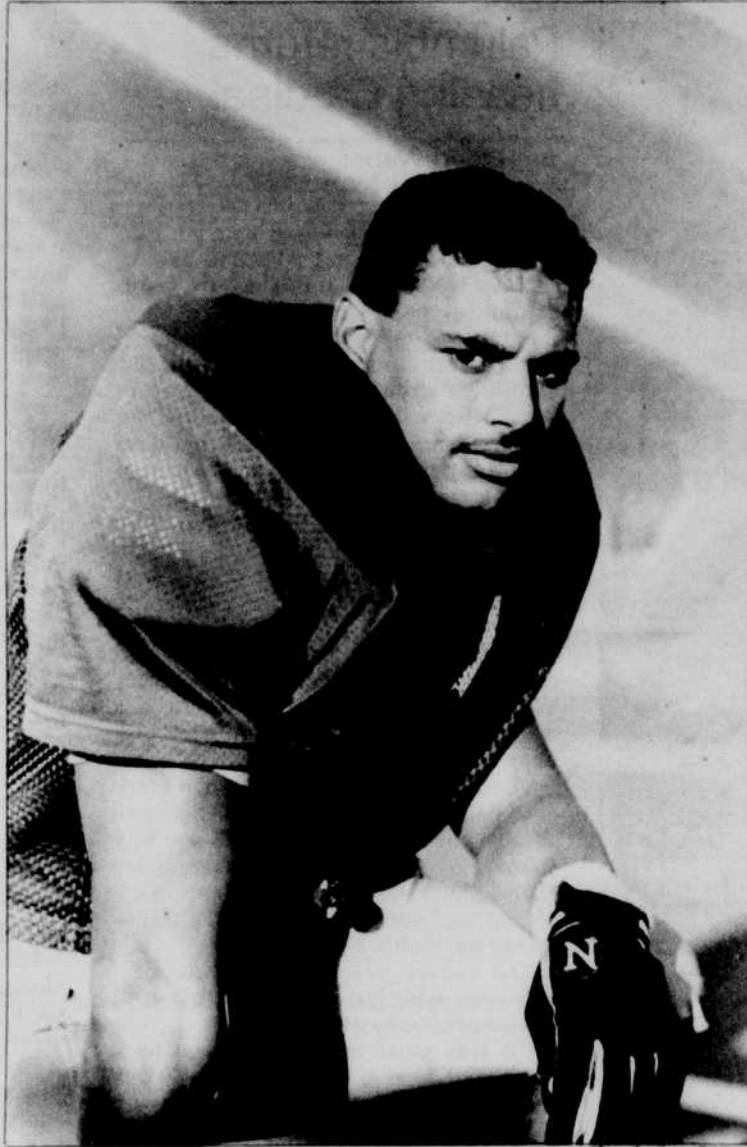


Photo by Sean Poston

Steve Kemp has ambition to be a youth counselor after his college football career comes to an end this season.

back take a three-step drop and knew where to go. He saw the screen and just stepped right in front of it."

Kemp said that as soon as he caught it, he was going for the end zone.

"When I caught it I was running to score," he said. "But any time I get an interception I think I'm going to make it."

And make it he has, in more ways than one.

When Kemp came to Oregon in 1986 he was forced to sit out his first year as a Proposition 48 casualty. He had to bring his grades up if he wanted to play. Currently he holds a 3.0 grade point average, not an easy task with football demanding so much time. But he said that fall term is actually his best term academically.

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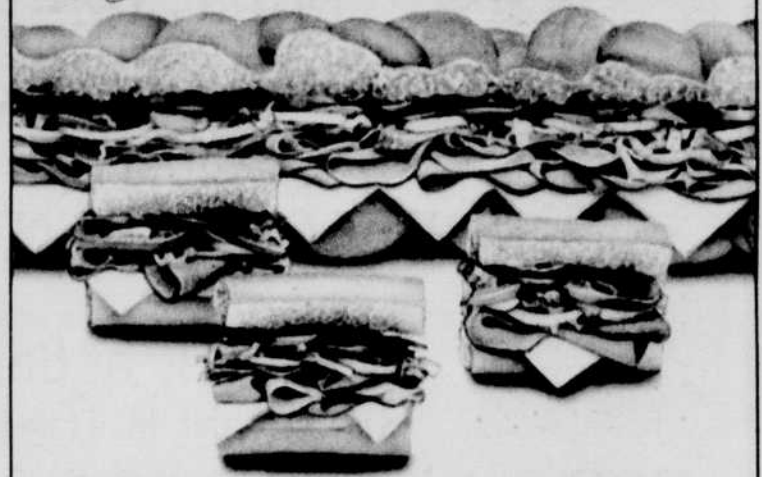


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