

# Off and running at last

After three years of adversity, tailback Saladin McCullough has found peace at Oregon

By Chris Hansen  
Sports Reporter

This is going to be a weekend of mixed emotions for Oregon tailback Saladin McCullough.

There will be the highs of playing in his first homecoming game for the Ducks, and there will be the lows of being 1000 miles from his home in Pasadena when his son, Saladin Jr., celebrates his third birthday on Saturday.



McCULLOUGH

And that, more than anything else, serves as a reminder of all that McCullough has had to endure over the last three years just to play football at a Division I school.

McCullough — Sollie to his friends — achieved prep stardom at Muir High School in Pasadena. In 1993, during the winter of his senior year, he signed a letter of intent to play football for the USC Trojans. But later that June, McCullough's SAT score was questioned amidst allegations that he had cheated on the test, possibly by getting an imposter to take the test for him.

USC yanked its offer, and McCullough spent the next year unsuccessfully trying to clear his name of an allegation that he has firmly denied.

He spent the past two years at two different junior colleges in the Los Angeles area playing football and earning his AA degree, giving him the necessary credentials to be eligible to play football at an NCAA accredited college. During that time he was heavily scrutinized by the Los Angeles media for certain incidents, including an allegation of auto theft that was later cleared up with no charges filed.

After USC, the school he had always dreamed of playing for, showed no interest, McCullough came to Oregon looking for a fresh start and an opportunity to finally play in the Pacific-10 Conference.

And so far, he hasn't disappointed — on the field or off.

"It's been a real change, but it's been real good," McCullough said of his new environment. "I miss my son. It's tough, but it is for the best because I am in school and working toward the future when I will be able to take better care of him."

All along, McCullough has claimed that he has never done anything wrong and that the person here at Oregon is no different than the person he was in Los Angeles.

"I just sit in my house or go to practice and school," McCullough said. "It is the same thing I did down there. But everything is going fine now."

Particularly since the local media isn't



MARK McTYRE/Emerald

“Up here they have good things to say about me. Down in LA they had some good things, but it was mostly bad. They wanted to make me the bad guy in everything. I was glad to get out.”

— Saladin McCullough  
Tailback

Oregon's Saladin McCullough celebrates one of the few bright moments in the Ducks' 33-14 loss to Washington on Oct. 26. The junior tailback has scored eight touchdowns during his first year with the Ducks.

waiting in ambush.

"It's cool," McCullough said of the treatment he has received thus far from the local media. "Up here they have good things to say about me. Down in LA they had some good things, but it was mostly bad. They wanted

to make me the bad guy in everything. I was glad to get out."

Oregon running back coach Gary Campbell, for one, never bought into the negative hype that surrounded McCullough.

"I think a lot of people kind of blow the

problems out of proportion," Campbell said. "People perceive things that he has done as problems when they were only allegations."

"I was only concerned with the reputa-

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## UA's Desert Swipe invades Eugene

■ DEFENSE: The Wildcats enter a new era of interception-oriented defense

By Andrea De Young  
Assistant Sports Editor

Whatever happened to Desert Swarm? Arizona's defense used to be feared in the Pacific-10 Conference and was known throughout the country for being extremely tough. Although the Wildcats aren't talked about in the same way as they once were, their conference foes know there is still something coming out of the desert that needs to be focused on.

Its name — Desert Swipe.  
Its purpose — take away any and all balls it can.

Last season, defense dominated the game between the Ducks and the Wildcats. When

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## Wildcat linebacker tackles the game

■ PLAYER: Chester Burnett has earned the reputation of being a player prepared for anything that comes his way on the field

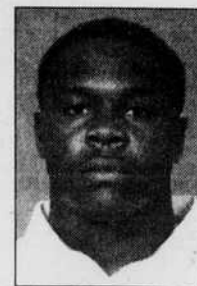
By Craig Sanders  
Arizona Daily Wildcat

It is about preparation. It is about planning every move you make. It is about knowing what your opponents are doing before they do it. That is how Arizona linebacker Chester Burnett approaches each game, each play, each series.

When Burnett was nicknamed "Chess" few knew how apt that name would really become.

"I sat down with Coach [Larry] McDuff before the Washington State game, and he told me he wanted me to take on more responsibility," Burnett said. "That is when I started to think about what I would need to do differently. I started to watch film and ask questions, and I really began to realize how important mental preparation is."

Combining that mental preparation with his natural



BURNETT

athletic ability has made Burnett one of the most effective and versatile linebackers in the Pacific-10 Conference.

Burnett is currently second in the conference in total tackles, with 90, and is the conference leader with 72 solo tackles. He has also recorded three sacks and seven tackles for a loss, and intercepted two passes. It may be a cliché, but wherever the ball is, Burnett is there too.

"I just try to get there, I can't really say I have a nose for the ball," Burnett said. "Most of it has to do with knowing what the opponents are doing and having the speed to get in on the play."

Speed is probably Burnett's biggest physical asset. He can run down tailbacks from behind, be used on a speed blitz or even cover opponent's receivers. As evi-

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