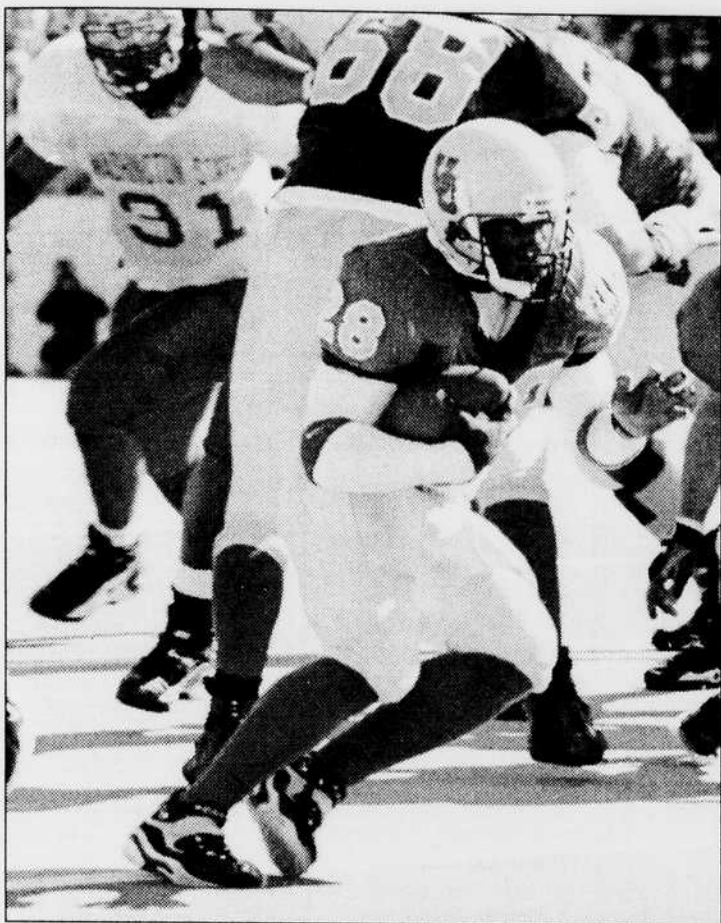
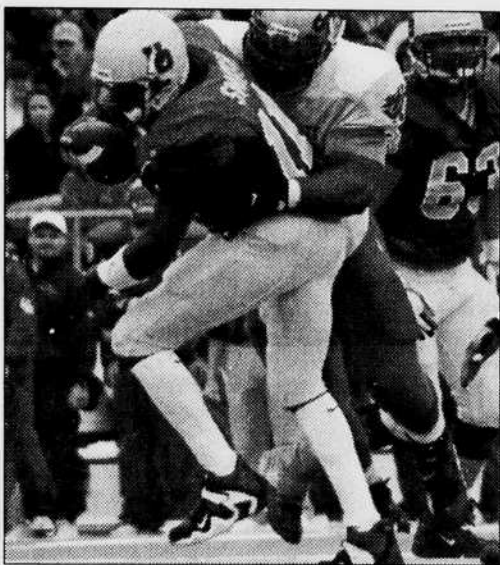


OREGON FOOTBALL



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CHAD PATTERSON

Tailback Saladin McCullough (above) caught the Cougar defense off guard, gaining 53 yards on the Ducks' first drive. Akili Smith (right) had his best game as a Duck, completing 14 of 30 passes for 205 yards and one touchdown.



Ducks: Players, coaches encouraged by play against top-ranked team

Continued from Page 11A

prised with an adjusted Oregon defense. The Ducks started defensive backs Brandon McLemore and Michael Fletcher at the outside linebacker positions to give Oregon a speedy pass rush that flustered Leaf early.

"We kind of got off on our heels," said Washington State head coach Mike Price. "We were reacting to what they were doing and it wasn't very good."

On the Cougars' first four possessions, they never made it past midfield and didn't have any first downs.

Oregon, on the other hand, took its first possession and drove 62 yards into Washington State territory. Tailback Saladin McCullough accounted for 53 of those yards, including runs of 13, 19 and 14 yards.

But the drive stalled at the Cougar 18 and kicker Joshua Smith's 35-yard field goal attempt was blocked by defensive tackle Gary Holmes.

After Washington State again went three and out on its ensuing possession, the Ducks moved the ball to the Cougar 36 on a five-yard scamper by McCullough and a 15-yard personal foul penalty against the Cougars. But Jason Maas, who started at quarterback for the Ducks, threw the first of his three interceptions, a pass deflected at the line of scrimmage by defensive end Dorian Boose and caught by Holmes.

Later in the first quarter, Maas would throw another interception that was first batted down at the line of scrimmage. Once again, the Ducks were in Cougar territory.

Beginning to see the trend?

"We had opportunities," said Oregon offensive coordinator Dirk Koetter. "Last week we always seemed to finish plays for a touchdown when we needed them. Bottom line, we just didn't get it done in the red-zone."

Maas finished the game four-of-14 for 56 yards. Other than two plays at the end of the second quarter and two plays at the end of the game, Maas rode the bench after the first period.

Washington State put the first points on the board with three and a half minutes gone in the second quarter. Leaf found Shawn McWashington streaking down the sideline for a 38-yard pass play that put Washington State on the Oregon three-yard line. Tailback Michael Black punched it in on the next play to give the Cougars a 7-0 lead.

On Oregon's next possession, Akili Smith hit McCullough on a screen pass that the tailback took for 43 yards to the Washington State 36, but a holding call brought the play back to the Oregon 25. The Ducks would later punt.

Toward the end of the second half, Oregon had the ball and a first down at the Cougar 17. Then, in order, a holding call moved the Ducks back to the 28, and a false start moved them to the 33.

After a three-yard pass to tailback Kevin Parker, Smith was replaced by Maas. His first pass was incomplete to Jelks and his second was intercepted in the end zone by Dee Moronkola.

With 1:59 remaining in the half, capped by a 25-yard completion to Chris Jackson and a 38-yard run by Black, Washington State needed only 1:03 to score another touchdown to lead 14-0 going into the break.

Oregon opened the third quarter with a field goal when its drive stalled on the 15-yard line.

After the defense again forced Washington State to punt, the Duck offense drove down to the Cougar 14. A holding call moved the Ducks back to the 25, then tight end Blake Spence dropped a pass from Smith that was a sure touchdown.

"That's a catch I make 99 out of 100 times," Spence said. "It was in the bread basket, then I think my knee hit it."

With Washington State up 21-6, the Ducks scored their only touchdown in the middle of the fourth quarter when Smith hit wide receiver Tony Hartley in the end zone with a perfect over-the-shoulder pass. The touchdown came on a fourth and 21 play from the Cougar 31.

In his first game of seeing most of the playing time, Smith was 14-of-30 for 205 yards and no interceptions.

Washington State followed Oregon's score with a ball-controlling, time-consuming drive that resulted in a field goal with 3:33 left in the game to seal its victory.

While all those in the Oregon locker room would rather have a high-scoring win than a hard fought loss, most were encouraged with the play of the defense and the ability of the offense to move the ball against a top-ranked team.

"We have to feel good about ourselves that we know we can beat these types of teams," Hartley said. "We have the confidence, now we just need to do some of the little things right."

Oregon also got dinged up a bit. Offensive linemen Seaton Daly and Chad Normoyle each suffered ankle injuries that make them questionable for next week's home game against UCLA. Cornerback Rashad Bauman has bruised ribs and possible concussion also making him questionable.

McCullough sat out most of the second half nursing some nagging injuries.

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