

“I want to win this one more than any other game. There is something special about me playing against USC, playing in the Coliseum, just being back home in L.A. ...”

Saladin McCullough
Oregon tailback



CHAD PATTESON/Emerald

McCullough has led the Ducks in rushing the last two seasons. His 740 yards this season are 87 more than the entire USC offense has gained on the ground.

BY CHRIS HANSEN
Assistant Sports Editor

On most everybody's calendar, October 25, 1997, is just another empty box signifying the end of the week. Maybe a chore or two is written into it, or even a birthday, but chances are it's just another Saturday. But if Oregon tailback Saladin McCullough has a calendar, that date is no doubt circled, starred and highlighted. And it probably has been ever since he arrived in Eugene for fall camp in 1996.

It is McCullough's day of redemption.

On Saturday, when the Ducks take on Southern California in Los Angeles, McCullough will line up against the team that turned its back on him and in a town that gave up on him.

By now the story has been told a million times: McCullough, a high school football superstar while playing for Muir High School in Pasadena, signed a letter of intent in 1993 to play for the team he grew up idolizing, USC. But a dispute over the validity

Headed HOME

Oregon tailback Saladin McCullough gets a chance to prove his worth against a team that turned its back on him one year ago

of his score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) kept McCullough out of school for one year and then in junior college for two more while he earned his Associate of Arts degree.

During those three years, McCullough was still making headlines in Los Angeles newspapers. He was twice suspended from his Pasadena City College team, once for be-

ing late to practice and once for being involved in a fight during practice. Both incidents found their way into the Los Angeles Times sports section.

The following year, McCullough, then attending El Camino Junior College in neighboring Torrance, was a passenger in a car being driven by teammate Trey Towns (now an Oregon defensive end). The car was pulled over, and both McCullough and Towns were arrested for possession of a stolen vehicle.

Apparently, the car had been loaned to Towns by his girlfriend. When the girl's father came home and found the car missing, he reported it stolen. The incident was quickly cleared up, and charges were never filed. But it was still a front page story in the Los Angeles Times sports section.

When McCullough was nearing the completion of his AA degree, he was still intent on being a Trojan. USC head coach John Robinson said thanks, but no thanks, and McCullough found his way up to Oregon.

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USC game renews memory of 1994 triumph in Los Angeles

OPINION



Ryan Frank

The year was 1994, but the situation was much the same. The Oregon Ducks, after winning their first game of the season over Portland State, suffered a potentially devastating two-game losing streak before beating an Iowa team that was a little down at the time.

With the win over the Hawkeyes, Oregon had stopped its two-game slide but still needed to prove itself in conference play.

To make matters worse, the upcoming conference game was anything but a cakewalk.

The Ducks had to travel to Los Angeles to play Southern California, where they hadn't won since 1971.

At the time, it appeared to be a game the seemingly hopeless Ducks could not win.

The teams that had already beaten Oregon were from the never-tough Western Athletic Conference, Hawaii and Utah, and the season seemed to be in shambles after only four games.

Playing at USC was exactly what Oregon didn't need.

To make matters worse, starting quarterback Danny O'Neil was in-

jured and wasn't going to play against the Trojans.

But thanks to Tony Graziani, the skinny kid from California who replaced O'Neil, Oregon would get its biggest upset in years with a 22-7 win.

The Ducks' season was turned around in a matter of three hours, and, as the rest of story goes, Oregon went on to win its final six games and the Pacific-10 Conference championship and earn a Rose Bowl berth for the first time since 1958.

Fast forward three seasons.

Oregon had lost three straight after

starting the season with three wins.

A season that held the promise of a fourth straight winning season all of a sudden turned into a 3-3 nightmare.

After the last of those three losses, a win of any kind was what Oregon needed. It could have come against Akron, a win is a win.

And come it did, over a Utah team that was far from Pac-10 quality.

The Ducks' first victory in a month gave them that much needed boost, but like the Iowa win in 1994,

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