

JACKPOT!

The Oregon Ducks never left a doubt in their 41-13 thrashing of then-No. 23 Air Force in the Las Vegas Bowl

By Chris Hansen
Assistant Sports Editor

LAS VEGAS — Christmas came five days early for the Oregon football program this past year in the form of a decisive Las Vegas Bowl victory over then-No. 23 Air Force.

It was Oregon's first postseason win in five tries dating back to the 1990 Freedom Bowl.

"I was thinking I wish there was a hole I could jump into."

Fisher DeBerry

Air Force head coach on what he was thinking after Oregon scored on its first two plays from scrimmage

and rolled to a 41-13 thumping of the Falcons (10-3).

By halftime, the Ducks (7-5) had broken the game wide open with a 26-0 lead and in the process, broke scores of records as well.

Individually, McCullough, who rushed for 150 yards, became Oregon's all-time, single-season rushing leader with 1,343 yards. He also broke the school's single-season all-purpose yards record, accumu-

lating 1,944 yards this season.

Johnson's game total of five receptions for 169 yards put him over 1,000 yards for the season and marked only the second time in school history Oregon has had a 1,000-yard rusher and 1,000-yard receiver in the same season.

Oregon's five touchdowns pushed the season total to 50, one more than last season's record-breaking total of 49.

And while it might not be an official record, Oregon set another mark that would seem to be hard to top. The Ducks' 41 points came on five scoring drives and one blocked punt that took a total of 3:20.

All this against a Falcon defense ranked ninth in the country that allowed an average of 12.5 points per game in the regular season.

Not to be overshadowed by the dominance of Oregon's offense was the spectacular play of the defense. It limited the Air Force running game, which was averaging 232.6 yards, to 152 yards. It also limited Falcon quarterback Blaine Morgan, who played the game with a bruised right thigh, to 59 passing yards.

Of equal importance, the win allowed Oregon to retain its claim on its fourth consecutive winning season and to stay tied with Washington as the winningest Pacific-10 Conference team in the last four years.

Johnson shreds Air Force; sheds track star image

Split end Pat Johnson ends his Oregon career with five receptions for 169 yards and two touchdowns in the Ducks' win

By Chris Hansen
Assistant Sports Editor

LAS VEGAS — Years from now fans won't remember that Duck split end Pat Johnson struggled to shed his image of world-class sprinter, wanting instead to be recognized as a quality, go-to receiver on the Oregon football team.

Instead, Johnson will be most remembered for the incredible four-game span that ended his senior season.

It started with his diving, game-winning touchdown catch to beat Washington in Seattle on Nov. 8.

Two weeks later in the Civil War game against Oregon State at Autzen Stadium, Johnson caught six passes for 199 yards, including touchdown grabs of 36, 45 and 90 yards. He also returned a punt 74 yards for a touchdown.

And on Dec. 20, in the Las Vegas Bowl against Air Force, Johnson had five catches for 169 yards with two touchdowns to earn the game's most valuable player award in the 41-13 win.

Johnson's first touchdown came on Oregon's first play from scrimmage, a 69-yard pass from Akili Smith that Johnson ran under and sped untouched down the left sideline for the score. His second touchdown came in the fourth quarter on a 78-yard bomb from Jason Maas.

Johnson made a great over-the-shoulder catch, shook defender Nishawn Smagh off his back and ran into the end zone.

"My friend gave me a Superman shirt [to wear under my jersey]," Johnson said after the Las Vegas Bowl win. "So I wanted to be Superman."

"This was a great opportunity, in front of the national media, for me to come out because I've always felt I was one of the best receivers in the nation."

It's been getting others to notice that has been the hard part.

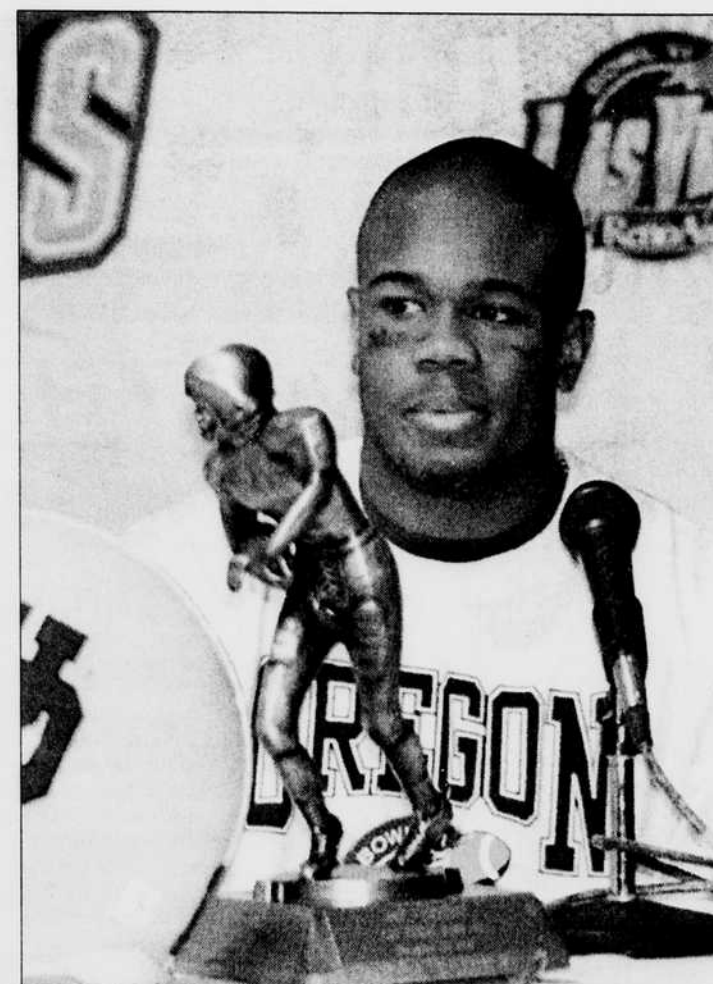
At 5-foot-10 and 180 pounds, Johnson could be considered too small for the professional ranks and thus overlooked in this spring's NFL draft.

"If I can't prove that I am one of the best receivers in the nation by my actions, then I don't even want to worry about it," Johnson said. "I just wanted to come out and show what I could do."

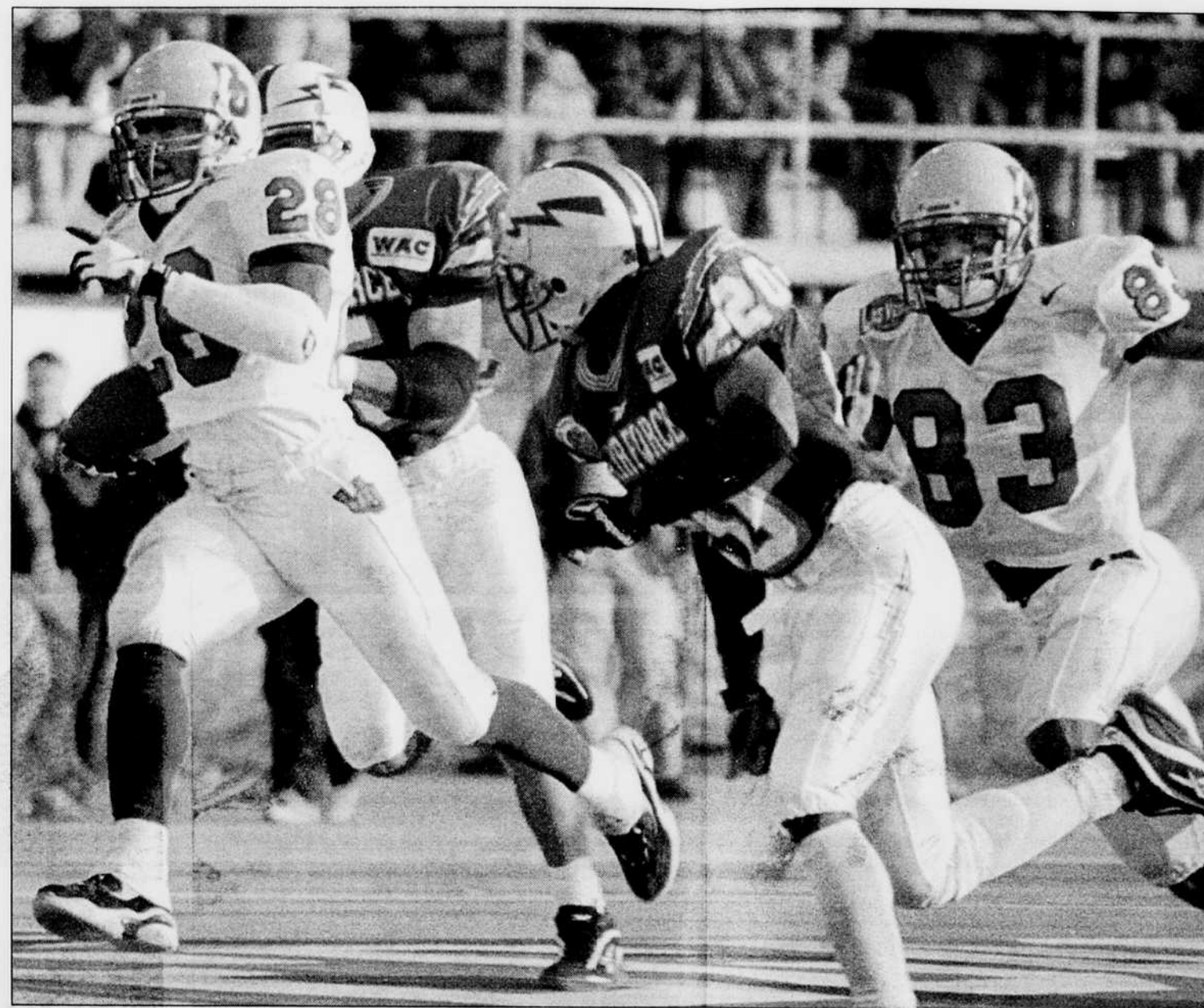
Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said: "He's always had the speed, always had the moves, always had the mental toughness, now he has a great set of hands and the desire and will to go get any ball."

"I am tremendously excited to watch Pat play for many, many years on Sunday."

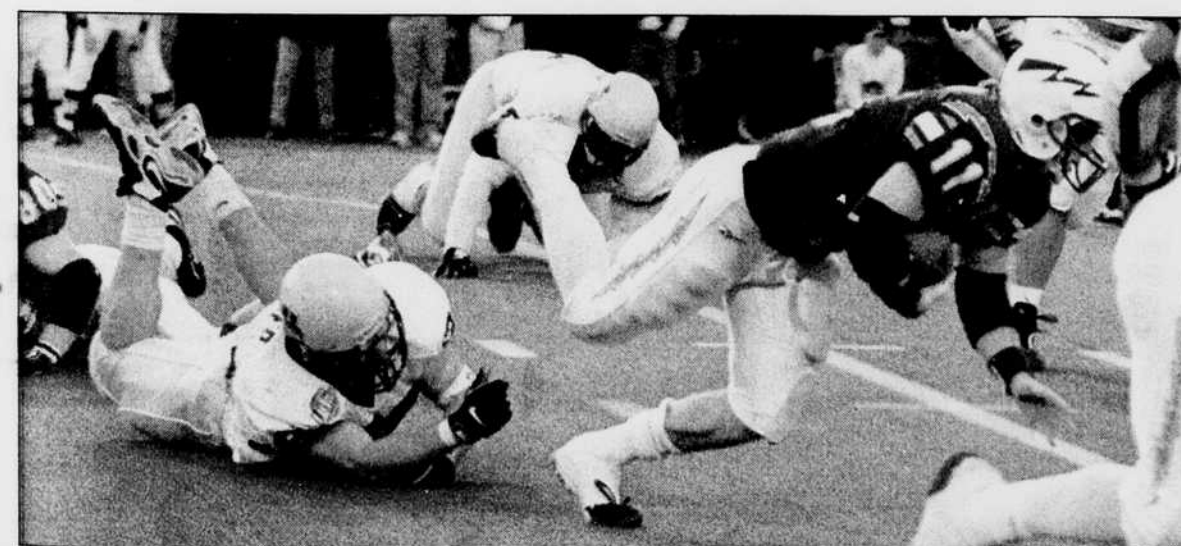
When that happens, Johnson's record-setting days on the Oregon track team will only be an afterthought. Johnson will now be remembered first as a great football player.



Johnson, sitting behind his MVP trophy, talks with the media during a postgame press conference. Johnson had five catches for 169 yards, including touchdown catches of 69 and 78 yards.



McCullough gave the Ducks their second touchdown in as many possessions when he went 76 yards on his first carry of the game. With his 150 yards rushing in the Las Vegas Bowl, McCullough became Oregon's all-time single-season rushing leader with 1,343.



Oregon linebacker Terry Miller trips up Air Force quarterback Blaine Morgan during the Ducks' Las Vegas Bowl victory. The Ducks' defense turned in one of its best performances of the season in defensive coordinator Rich Stubler's final game with Oregon. The Ducks limited the Falcons' triple-option offense to just 152 yards rushing.

Defense shines in Stubler's final game with the Oregon Ducks

By Ryan Frank
Sports Editor

Oregon's defense had its best showing in two seasons in Rich Stubler's farewell game

LAS VEGAS — It could be said that Rich Stubler had his share of problems during his two-year stint with the Oregon Ducks.

The defense never found the success it had in the years prior to the defensive coordinator's arrival.

Who knows whether Bellotti would have sent Stubler on his way or retained him for another season, but Stubler made Bellotti's decision for him, resigning on Dec. 5 to pursue a

head coaching job in the Canadian Football League.

But in his final game with the Ducks, Stubler's young defense played its finest game in the last two seasons.

The Ducks were phenomenal in their 41-13 Las Vegas Bowl win. They limited the Falcons to 152 yards on the ground.

But for Stubler, the end had come. It didn't matter how well the Oregon defense played; he would have no remorse for his decision to leave the college ranks.

The 48-year-old Glenwood Springs, Colo., native had had enough of college football. He was ready to get back to professional ranks "because I work on football there," he said.

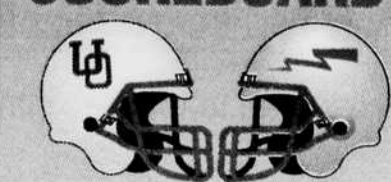
"I don't go recruiting. I traditionally go to

work at 5:30 in the morning and when my work was done, I could go home," Stubler said of his work in professional football. "When my work's done now, I make two hours of recruiting calls. I go do [interviews] then I get home at midnight. I don't see my wife much."

"We're a big part of each other's life, and I've missed that part of my life. I love football to death, and that is what I do for a living, but that's not my life. There are other things in my life that I love."

"I love going to the ocean. I love being able, after the season's over, to go put my feet up for a few days and rejuvenate and not get on a plane and fly to Chicago and tell some kid how great he is when I know he's not as good as what we're playing with."

SCOREBOARD



41 13

	1	2	3	4	Final
Oregon	13	13	8	7	41
Air Force	0	0	13	0	13

Team Totals

	Oregon	Air Force
First Downs	22	11
Rushing Att.	43	41
Rushing Yards	266	152
Passes Att.	30	21
Passes Comp.	16	6
Passing Yards	317	59
Total Yards	583	211
Penalties	19-166	7-57
Possession time	23:22	29:42
Third-down con.	7-15	3-15
Fourth-down con.	1-1	1-2
Kickoff returns	3-54	7-114
Punt returns	5-58	3-27
Interceptions	1-0	1-7
Fumble Returns	1-2	1-45
Punts	6-232	10-366
Avg. per punt	38.7	36.6

Rushing

Oregon	Att	Yds	Long	Avg
McCullough	17	150	76	8.8
Maas	5	40	28	8.0
Latimer	5	30	16	6.0
Cooper	6	27	11	4.5
Air Force	Att	Yds	Long	Avg
Singleton	13	66	51	5.1
Ruff	7	27	11	3.9
Brown	1	16	16	16.0
Farmer	1	13	13	13.0

Passing

Oregon	Att-Comp-Int	Yds	Long	TD
Maas	15-9-0	188	78	3
Smith	10-4-1	87	69	1
Feeley	4-3-0	42	22	0
Johnson	1-0-0	0	0	0
Air Force	Att-Comp-Int	Yds	Long	TD
Morgan	19-6-1	59	15	0
Bonds	2-0-0	0	0	0

Receiving

Oregon	No.	Yds	Long	TD
Johnson	5	169	78	2
Hartley	3	35	21	2
Spence	2	59	34	0
Collins	2	5	5	0
Oregon	No.	Yds	Long	TD
Newman	2	29	15	0
Ruff	2	10	8	0
Rillos	1	13	13	0
Farmer	1	7	7	0

Notes

■ **THE END OF AN ERA:** Defensive line coach Joe Schaffeld coached his final game for Oregon in the Las Vegas Bowl. The 62-year-old coach had been with the Ducks for 24 seasons, longer than any coach in school history. "They kept telling me they were going to win it for me," Schaffeld said after the win in Las Vegas. "They're really good kids, and I'm going to miss the hell out of them."

■ **BIG WIN CATCHES VOTERS' ATTENTION:** In the final college football polls released this weekend, Oregon was 27th in the Associated Press poll (14 votes shy of the 25th spot) and 30th in the USA Today/ESPN poll (49 votes shy of the 25th spot).

■ **TOUCHDOWN HAPPY:** The Ducks' three touchdown plays of 69-plus yards were the three longest touchdown plays ever against Air Force in a bowl game.

Photos by:
Chad Patten