



Oregon offensive linemen go after the sled on the first day of spring football practice at Autzen Stadium. The Ducks will go through 15 workouts this spring, finishing up with a final scrimmage at Kaiser's Volcano Stadium on May 2.

NICK MEDLEY/Emerald

Once again, QB situation up in the air

Head coach Mike Bellotti expects Akili Smith to join the battle for the starting position at quarterback 'sometime soon'

By Joel Hood
Sports Reporter

Spring has arrived, and with it so have questions concerning the Ducks' starting quarterback position next fall.

Akili Smith has been suspended from the team following alleged team conduct violations during the offseason and will remain so until head coach Mike Bellotti is satisfied.

"Akili is suspended indefinitely," Bellotti said. "He is being evaluated on a daily basis, and I do expect him to rejoin the team at my invitation sometime soon."

But just about everything else is uncertain.

Jason Maas enters spring drills this week as No. 1 on the Ducks' depth chart in the absence of Smith. Last season, Maas and Smith combined to throw for 21 touchdowns and over 3,000 yards. Although Smith was officially named Oregon's starting quarterback in midseason, Maas started five games last season and capped the season with a 188-yard, three-touchdown performance against Air Force in the Las Vegas Bowl.

But whether Maas can impress coaches enough to give him the job after Smith's eventual reinstatement remains to be seen. This spring Maas is just happy to have depth at the position.

"I expect this spring to be very competitive," the senior said. "It will give some guys a chance to learn the intricacies of the offense, and it will make us a better team. But I think that everyone would like to see a clear-cut starter emerge."

Perhaps. But according to redshirt-freshman Joey Harrington, the most important thing is to find a situation that works best for the team, regardless of personal agendas.

"I just hope to see what works for us," Harrington said. "If it takes two, three or four quarterbacks, then I imagine that's what the coaches will do. Generally, you'd like to see



SMITH

Questions abound as spring ball starts

Derien Latimer and Kevin Parker are the top candidates to fill the void at running back left by Saladin McCullough

By Alex Pond
Sports Editor

Gone is one of the most prolific offensive trios in Oregon history in running back Saladin McCullough, wide receiver Pat Johnson and tight end Blake Spence.

In their places are a host of seemingly talented, but unproven players.

Gone are both the offensive and defensive coordinators from last season's victorious Las Vegas Bowl team.

In their places are Bob Foster, who will take over as defensive coordinator after spending the past three seasons as a defensive consultant to Willamette University, and Mark Tedford, who is the new offensive coordinator after spending six seasons at Fresno State.

Akili Smith, the quarterback who ended last season as the starter, is gone, too — at least for the time being. Smith remains suspended indefinitely by head coach Mike Bellotti, although the coach said there is a good chance Smith will rejoin the team soon.

And so, with a number of question marks surrounding the team, the Ducks kicked off spring football practice Monday afternoon.

Nonetheless, Bellotti greeted his fourth spring as the head coach with the optimism and enthusiasm just about all coaches have

"I am very excited. I think spring football is the best time of the year. It's a chance to really focus on the athletes."

Mike Bellotti
UO head football coach

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Oregon men in the rough at Western Intercollegiate

Head coach Steve Nosler expects his Ducks to rebound from a lackluster first day as the tournament continues today

By Tim Pyle
Freelance Sports Reporter

After a rocky first day at the Western Intercollegiate in Santa Cruz, Calif., on Monday, the Oregon men's golf team hopes to improve its standing in today's final round.

The Ducks shot a combined 592 — 297 in Round 1 and 295 in Round 2 — in the first two rounds to put them in 17th place.

"I just hope that [the Ducks] will rise to the occasion tomorrow and give it their all," Oregon head coach Steve Nosler said.

Long Beach State leads the tournament with a 567 score and has a five-stroke lead on second-place San Jose State.

In individual action, California's Dan Coyle is tied for the lead with Long Beach State's Rhey

Luna at 138. However, 11 other players are within five strokes of the pair's score.

Adrian Burtner leads the Ducks through two rounds with a 145 (74, 71) at the par-71, 6,483-yard Pasatiempo Golf Course. Burtner is tied for 22nd and seven strokes off the lead.



Ben Crane, who is ranked No. 56 in the nation, shot a 148 (73, 75), which is 2.6 shots higher than his 72.7-per-round average. Crane is tied for 43rd.

Chris Cone shot a 149 (74, 75), Ryan Lavoie a 150 (76, 74), and

Nick Davey shot a 156 (76, 80) to round out Oregon's individual scores.

"Those scores don't sound as bad as other scores we've had on this course," Nosler said. "I don't know if the course is just playing easier [for everyone] or what."

Nosler expressed some concern about the Ducks chances at qualifying for the NCAA West Regionals and Championships if they cannot begin to fin-

ish higher than their conference and regional rivals.

"We can't be in these kinds of positions because we need to finish ahead of many of these teams," Nosler said.

Oregon has two more tournaments before playing in the Pac-10 Championships on April 27-29.

The three other Pac-10 teams competing in the tournament all rank ahead of the Ducks after two rounds, although Stanford is in 16th with just a two-stroke lead on Oregon.

California is tied for fourth with Brigham Young at 579, 12 shots off the team lead. Washington is one stroke behind the Golden Bears at 580 and in fifth place.

Nosler said he expects his team to rebound in the final round and finish off the tournament strongly.

"I think [the Ducks] will play well tomorrow," Nosler said. "It's just disappointing that we shot ourselves out of it after the first round again."

Day 1

■ **TOP DUCK**
Adrian Burtner
Tied for 22nd with 145

■ **LEADER:**
Dan Coyle
California with 138

■ **TOP TEAM:**
Long Beach State
with 567

■ **OREGON:**
Tied for 17th with 592