



Major League Baseball
Seattle at Minnesota,
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SPORTS

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"Mel Kiper doesn't like me. He said I was small, he said I was a shrimp. Then he said I couldn't catch — whatever."

Pat Johnson
Former UO receiver



"I think that people realize that [Johnson's] best football years are still ahead of him."

Mike Bellotti
UO head coach

Although some question his size, Johnson's speed will probably make him a wanted man in Saturday's NFL draft.

EMERALD

Green Dreams

Hard work and natural ability are about to pay off for Pat Johnson and his family

By Joel Hood
Sports Reporter

Monday night, 7:41 p.m. Pat Johnson is sitting on a tan couch inside his tiny, floor-level campus apartment playing NFL Gameday '98 on his Sony Playstation with friend and former Oregon teammate Jibri Hodge. Johnson's Green Bay Packers trail the Hodge-led Chicago Bears by five points with just over two minutes to play in the fourth quarter.

To Johnson's left is his Oregon football helmet, which is still covered with stickers from the senior's bowl circuit months earlier. A photo of his last-second, game-winning catch against Washington — the single most defining moment of Johnson's four-year career with the Ducks — adorns his refrigerator.

What a strange, quick ride it has been for Johnson. From track phenom to an unreliable receiver on the football field to Las Vegas Bowl most valuable player, it seems the only constant during Johnson's Oregon career has been inconsistency. That, and the

kind of speed reserved for aircrafts and certain properties of nature.

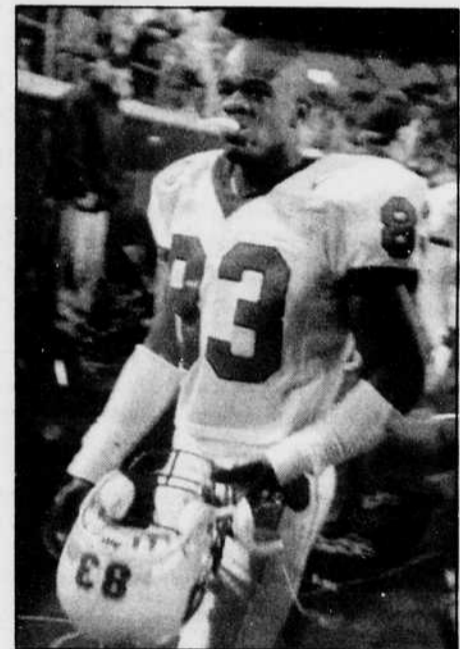
What a remarkable road he has traveled. And what a surreal, laid-back environment Johnson finds himself in just days before Saturday's NFL draft.

It's hard to imagine that this 180-pound, sweat-shirt-clad lump is the same green and yellow jackrabbit who ran circles around Pacific-10 Conference defenders last season and who posted the second fastest time in the 40-yard dash at the NFL combine workouts last March.

It's even harder to imagine — as Johnson props his bare feet on the edge of the couch and positions himself for the Packers' inevitable game-winning touchdown — that he has ever shown anything less than the supreme confidence he is demonstrating tonight.

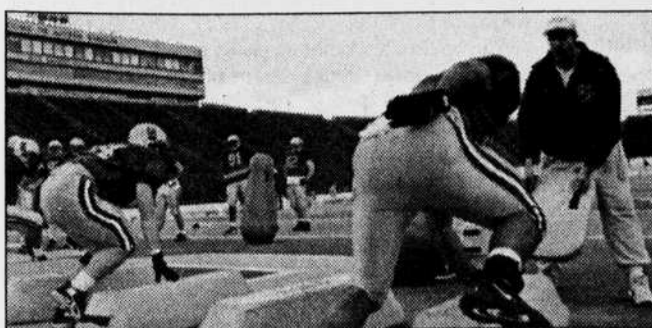
With his hat tilted to the back and his head lightly bouncing in time with the rap music pounding out of his stereo, Johnson is picking the Bears' secondary

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Johnson's two touchdowns earned him the Las Vegas Bowl MVP.



NICK MEDLEY/Emerald

Defensive line coach Robin Ross runs his troops through drills Tuesday afternoon at Autzen Stadium.

Bellotti: Still room for improvement

But head coach Mike Bellotti says Oregon's defense, which allowed 185 rushing yards per game last season, has shown improvement in spring practice

By Alex Pond
Sports Editor

As spring football practice nears the halfway point, Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti is pleased, but not satisfied, with what he's seen so far.

"If I had to assign a grade, I'd say we're a passing grade

right now," Bellotti said with a slight grin.



Whether that means passing with flying colors or just barely passing remains to be seen in the Ducks' final nine workouts of the spring.

Oregon began spring drills last week looking at several areas, most notably trying to improve a defense that has struggled mightily the past two seasons, establishing a depth chart at quarterback and finding re-

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