

Quarterback: Maas sacked twice in debut

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"It's not exactly as we drew it up on the chalkboard, but it's one of those things that Akili can do because of his escapability and his toughness," the coach said.

Despite Smith's performance, Maas entered the game with four minutes, 22 seconds remaining and the Ducks ahead 34-0 in the second quarter.

"At that point, early in the first half, the game was in hand and I wanted to get Jason in there and get some reps," Bellotti said. "We had talked about it earlier that we were going to put Jason in the game at some point in time. Akili knew it, but I didn't tell anyone else that.

"Regardless of whether it was going good or bad, we just said, 'Hey, we're going to do that, we want you to know that,' and [Smith] was fine with it. Jason was excited.

"Unfortunately, I think Jason was not supported as well. A couple passes he threw were dropped."

Maas was sacked twice and

saw three of his five passes fall incomplete, including his first attempt of the day that hit Damon Griffin just as the receiver turned his head to see the ball.

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Mike Bellotti

About Smith's touchdown pass to Nero against Michigan State

"I don't think it hit me in the hands, but it hit me quick. The defense made good coverage, and that just happens," said Griffin, who was playing in his first game after missing all of last season with a wrist injury.

But despite that perceived lack of support for Maas, Smith started

again against UTEP, getting off to a sluggish start before rallying in the fourth quarter to better his career high from the previous game with 295 yards passing on 17 of 33 completions, including a touchdown to Herman Ho-Ching and Smith's first two interceptions on the season.

With Smith off to such a slow start against the Miners, it came as no surprise that another Duck tallied a completion. What should be a surprise was the identity of that Duck: sophomore wide receiver LaCorey Collins, who hit Griffin for a 25-yard pass in the second quarter.

So while Smith put up career-high numbers in successive games, the man he combined to break three Oregon passing records with last season continues to toil on the bench. Sadly for Maas, the Ducks' quarterback controversy no longer revolves around whether he can unseat Smith as Oregon's starter, but whether Maas can fend off junior A.J. Feeley and maintain his status as Smith's backup.

Maas and Smith Career Notes



MAAS

Finished the year as the starter in five of 10 appearances... ranked fifth in the Pac-10 in passing efficiency, 18th in the country... honorable mention academic All-American... his five touchdown passes at Stanford were one shy of the school record.



SMITH

Started seven games last year... earned Pac-10 player of the Week after completing 15 of 25 passes for 193 yards at Washington... finished the year as the team's second leading rusher (183 yards, 89 carries, 2 TDs)... only two interceptions in his first eight appearances...



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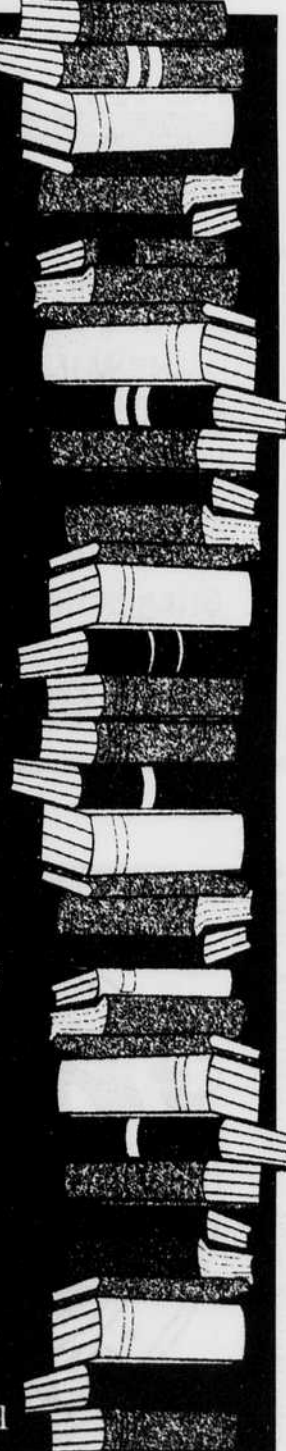
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