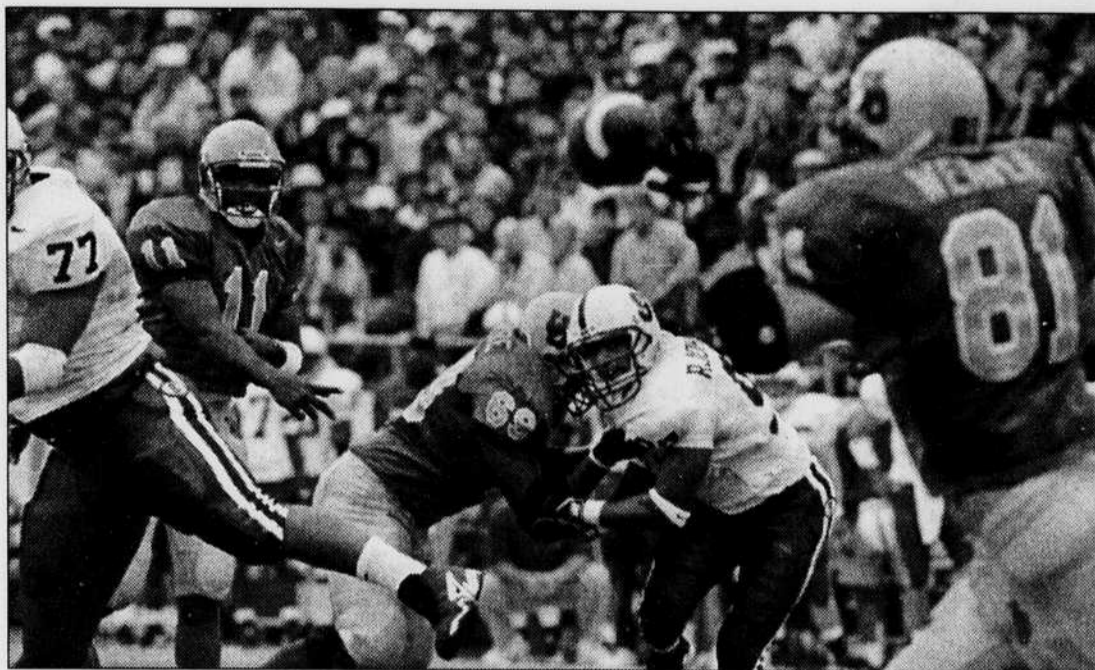


# OREGON 63, STANFORD 28



Oregon quarterback Akili Smith passes to tight end Jed Weaver during the Ducks' win at Autzen Stadium on Saturday.

Matt Hanks/Emerald

## Hood

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games to Stanford; last year we really thought we had them," wide receiver Tony Hartley said. "But we let it slip away. They haven't been saying pleasant things about us. They have downplayed us, said we weren't that good.

"When we came out today we really had a sense of urgency. We were going to let them know that we are for real. I think it was evident."

What was also evident was exactly how far this team has come since its game against Stanford last season.

"I challenged [my team] at halftime to come back," Bellotti said. "The best thing about it was we had another half of football to get that taste out of our mouth."

Not quite. The best thing about this win is that Oregon is 4-0 for

the first time since 1988. The Duck defense, which was maligned and poked fun at all of last season, held Stanford in the second half to just 179 yards of offense and seven points.

The best thing about this win was that it came against Stanford, which has owned the Ducks since 1991—a stretch of seasons that has resurrected the football program at Oregon.

There is no question that Oregon came out to make a statement in its first Pacific-10 Conference game. However, the difference this season is that the conference and all of college football are taking notice.

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## Ducks

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in place of Reuben Droughns, who left the UTEP game with an injured ankle then sat out last week against San Jose State.

The second quarter Saturday resembled the shootout from last season, as the two teams traded scores and the Cardinal closed the gap to 42-21 at halftime.

Kevin Parker gave the Ducks a four-touchdown lead on a one-yard run before the Cardinal's Maxwell Stevenson answered with a one-yard score of his own.

Damon Griffin then ensured his spot on Saturday's edition of SportsCenter when Smith hit him at the 20-yard line with a bullet that bounced into the air and off a defender before Griffin could regain control. The senior dragged cornerback Tank Williams for 10 yards before Stanford's Riall Johnson hit him at the two, propelling them both into the endzone and the Ducks to a 35-7 lead.

The Cardinal bounced back with a 23-yard DeRonnie Pitts

touchdown grab with just under six minutes remaining in the half. The Stanford defense held on Oregon's next possession, forcing the Ducks to punt. Oregon fans then witnessed something they hadn't seen for four years, as Emory Brock ended Josh Bidwell's streak of 189 consecutive punts without a blocked attempt and gave Stanford the ball on the Duck 10-yard line.

The Cardinal closed the lead to 35-21 on Todd Husak's seventh-consecutive completion, a 10-yard scoring strike to Dave Davis, before the Ducks could answer with a 23-yard touchdown pass from Smith to tight end Jed Weaver with 46 seconds remaining in the

half. "We were trying to do too much," rover Michael Fletcher said of the defensive lapse. "We were a little overzealous at the time, trying to make too many

*"Our receivers are making plays, and our running backs are making plays when they get the opportunity. I would not want to have to try to defend us."*

Mike Bellotti  
UO head coach

plays. We corrected all that in the second half."

The Oregon defense allowed Stanford just seven more points and held the high-powered Cardinal passing attack, which was averaging 308 yards per game, to just 92

yards in the second half. In fact, the Cardinal managed only 179 yards of total offense in the second half, one yard less than Droughns. After returning with 34 yards on seven carries in the first half, the junior exploded

in the second half with 180 yards on 15 carries, including touchdown runs of one, 67 and 40 yards.

Droughns became the first player in Oregon history to rush for 200 yards in a game twice in one season with his 213-yard performance. The JC transfer ran for 202 yards in the Ducks' opener against Michigan State.

"Reuben did a heck of a job today," Smith said. "He had some nice gaping holes to run through that the offensive line created."

The line, including seniors Marco Aguirre, Stefan deVries and Michael Klews, as well as juniors Deke Moen and Josh Beckett, was lauded by the coach as well.

"The offense is playing very well right now," Bellotti said. "I think it starts with the offensive line. They're a veteran group. They understand each other, they communicate well, they've given Akili a lot of time, and he's been very accurate with his passes. Our receivers are making

plays, and our running backs are making plays when they get the opportunity. I would not want to have to try to defend us."

Conspicuous in his absence Saturday was middle linebacker Peter Sirmon, the Pac-10's leading tackler in 1997 who was listed as questionable with a pectoral injury entering Saturday's game.

Starting in his place was senior Chris Vandiver, who led the team with 19 tackles, two for loss, and a sack on the day.

"Peter's our general out there on defense," Fletcher said. "But Chris Vandiver did an awesome job today. I just saw him all over the field, covering everybody, making big hits. That's just the sign of a good team—the ring-leader goes down, the next guy up in line comes in and makes plays."

The Ducks now have a week to prepare for consecutive Pac-10 road games, first at Washington State on Oct. 10, then at No. 5 UCLA a week later.

## Defense holds up under pressure

Fill-in linebacker Chris Vandiver leads with 19 tackles in one game

By Rob Moseley  
Oregon Daily Emerald

That the Duck offense could score on Stanford's defense in its Pacific-10 Conference opener on Saturday was not in question.

The ability of the Oregon defense, ranked seventh in the conference, to contain the Cardinal offense, ranked fourth, was a major question.

Adding to the pressure on the defense was the absence, because of injury, of preseason all-conference linebacker Peter Sirmon, the unit's emotional and physical leader.

Taking over both roles Saturday was a familiar face. Senior linebacker Chris Vandiver took over Sirmon's play-calling duties and led the Oregon defense with 19 tackles, two for loss, and a sack in the 63-28 victory.

"Those were some big shoes to fill, and I was a little worried," Vandiver said. "I was scared, definitely excited, but I felt like I could do it, and with the guys around

me, it made it easy."

It was a triumphant return for the 6-foot-2, 213-pound Lebanon native. Vandiver recorded 49 tackles and two sacks as a sophomore in 1996 before being relegated to mostly special teams duty with the emergence of Sirmon last season.

Vandiver managed just nine tackles in 1997 and entered this season listed below both Sirmon and junior Aaron Chevront, who leads the Ducks in tackles this season with 37 so far.

"The way Aaron plays, he plays great, so I don't mind backing up either of those guys," Vandiver said. "I'm ready to stand there and do what I could do to help the team."

With Sirmon possibly facing season-ending surgery due to a torn pectoral muscle injured in fall camp, Vandiver may be expected to repeat his performance against the Cardinal in the coming weeks.

"Chris is no stranger to playing for us," head coach Mike Bellotti said. "He has started many games in the past. He's been a good football player; obviously, Peter Sirmon is a great football player. We don't have Peter Sirmon anymore. Vandy's going to step up. I have great confidence, and I think our

team now has confidence, in guys like both Aaron Chevront and Chris Vandiver stepping up and playing great football."

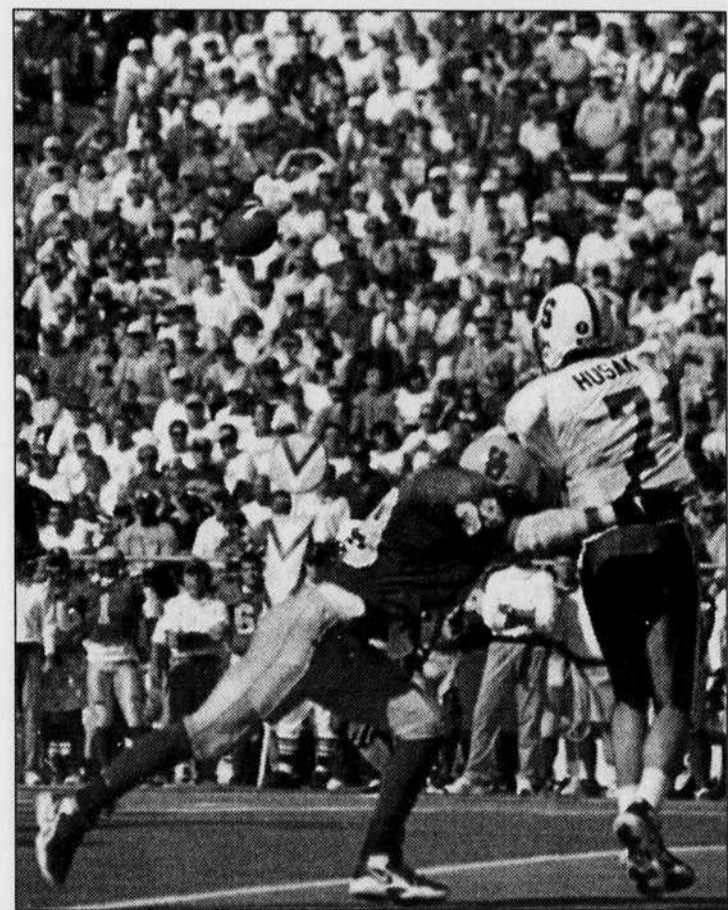
Chevront acknowledged Sirmon's absence, but echoed the team's confidence in Vandiver.

"I think the biggest thing we miss in Peter is just the comfort zone, because Peter's been out there, and he's been a solid starter for us," Chevront said of Sirmon, whose streak of 17 consecutive starts was snapped. "We're missing it a little bit, but Chris came in and didn't miss a beat. There was no panic at all without Sirmon out there."

Bellotti said Sirmon would have an MRI Monday to determine whether the junior would indeed miss the remainder of the season.

Although that would provide Vandiver with the opportunity to start for the remainder of the season, he said he would rather see Sirmon in uniform.

"It's exciting and it's nice to be back in that spot, but the way it happened and also under the circumstance—he's our best player—you never want that to happen," Vandiver said. "I don't have a problem backing up a guy like that."



Inside linebacker Chris Vandiver takes down Stanford quarterback Todd Husak during Saturday's game.

Matt Hanks/Emerald