

Morton following family tradition

USC tailback Chad Morton is the last of five star athlete brothers

By Tim Pyle

Oregon Daily Emerald

For the Morton family, athletics are more than a pastime.

They are a way of life.

So it is not surprising that Chad Morton, Southern California's starting tailback, will play a key role in the Trojans' bid to ruin Oregon's homecoming game Saturday.

The Mortons have come to expect athletic excellence.

Michael and Stanley Morton — the two older half-brothers of Eric, Johnnie and Chad — started this family business. Both played sports professionally. Michael was a running back for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Meanwhile, professional baseball was Stanley's gig.

Then came Eric, who was a wide receiver at Dartmouth.

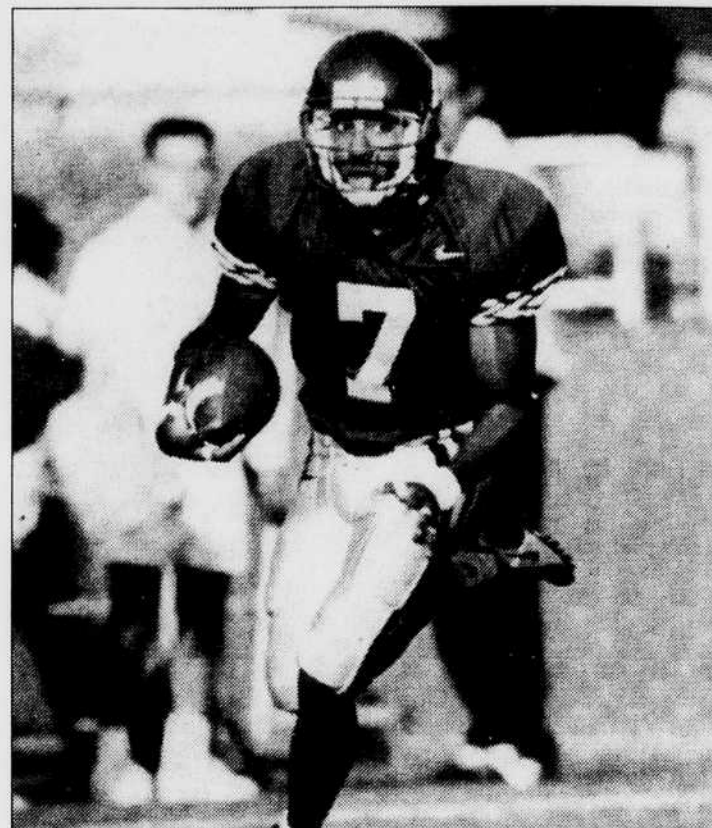
And last before Chad was Johnnie, who to this point has been the most successful in the Morton family trade. Johnnie ranks first in pass receptions in Trojan history with 201 and has lined up at wide-out for the Detroit Lions ever since they made him a first-round draft pick in 1994.

After following in Johnnie's footsteps by choosing USC, Chad now has his chance to shine as the Trojans' tailback.

The youngest Morton says years of competing with and watching his brothers perform have prepared him to uphold the family name.

"We had three-on-three games [with my brothers and three cousins] in the streets growing up through the years," says Morton, who is from South Torrance, Calif. "That's where it all started, I guess."

Academically, it all started with Morton's parents. Although still a junior in athletic eligibility, Morton is scheduled to earn a sociology major this spring and has a 3.41 GPA.



USC Athletic Department

Chad Morton is the second member of his family to excel for the Trojan football team.

He was named to the Pacific-10 Conference's all-Academic first team in 1997 and also received the Bob Chandler Award as USC's top underclassmen athlete, student and leader.

"Everything is important to [my parents]," says Morton, a candidate for Academic all-America honors. "They made sure I concentrated on grades before football started. They wouldn't hesitate to yank me off the field if I didn't."

The Trojan coaches have not always had Morton tabbed for the most prestigious position at a school appropriately nicknamed "Tailback U.," from the days of O.J. Simpson, Marcus Allen and Charles White. When Morton first arrived on the USC campus in 1995, he was redshirted as a cornerback.

In 1996, he began the season by

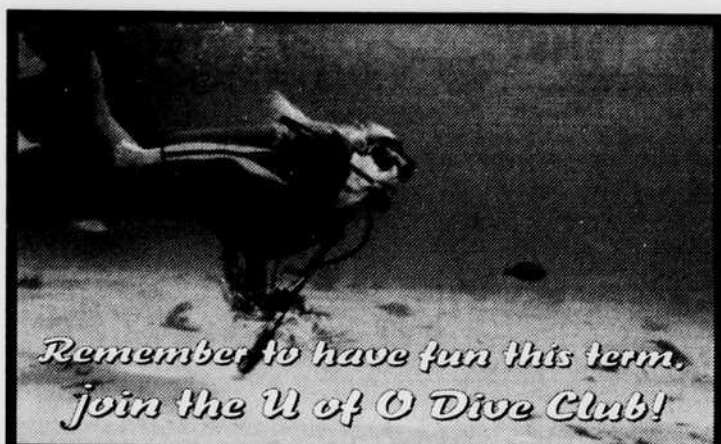
contributing to the team in nearly every possible fashion, providing depth at cornerback and tailback and also covering and returning kicks on special teams.

When he got an extended opportunity to produce at tailback, Morton riddled Oregon State's defense for career highs of 143 yards, including a 73-yard touchdown dash.

But Morton returned to full-time defensive and special-team duties for the second half of the season. He started three late-season games at cornerback before injuring his back and finished fifth in the conference with a punt-return average of 9.3 yards.

After beginning the 1997 season as a backup cornerback, Morton started four mid-season games at free safety. In that stretch, he

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Saturday

- 1:30 Tailgate at Autzen
- 3:30 Game
- 8:00 Dinner at Arthur's
- 10:00 Post game Celebration at Back Door Bar

Sunday

- 11:00 AM Take Mom & Dad to Brunch at Arthur's

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