

# Football

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Abrams' second field goal of the day, from 25 yards out, and Oregon (6-1, 3-1) was able to run out the final four minutes on seven runs by Derien Latimer to ice the win.

"The defensive line did an excellent job," said Oregon safety Brandon McLemore, who stuffed USC tailback and friend Chad Morton on the Trojans' first play from the seven-yard line. "They shot their gaps, held their contain line and gave us lanes to run through. If you can just run through a lane and make a play every time, that means we can be a great defense."

Latimer ran for 87 yards on 24 carries in place of Reuben Droughns, the Pac-10's leading rusher who is out for the season with a broken leg. Sophomore Jason Cooper earned the start, the first of his career, but fumbled on his second carry of the Ducks' opening possession and played sparingly the rest of the evening.

"I definitely wanted coach and the guys and Akili to have faith in me, and I just didn't step it up in the first half," Latimer said. "In order to gain the confidence from my teammates, I had to take it up to another level."

Latimer had just eight yards on as many carries in the first half but recovered after halftime.

"When you have guys that haven't carried the ball a lot, it takes a while to get a rhythm of

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**Derien Latimer**  
Oregon tailback

the plays and try to read blacks and feel it, and Derien did a great job of coming back in the second half," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said.

Smith completed 15-of-28 passes including 13-of-24 in the first half, which ended with Smith taking a knee to end a streak of 17 consecutive passing plays. The senior also ran for 72 yards on eight carries and threw for one touchdown, a 55-yard strike to Tony Hartley that tied the game at 10-10 in the third quarter.

USC took a 10-3 lead into halftime on a second-quarter screen pass to Chad Morton from Van Raaphorst that turned into a 70-yard touchdown and a 49-yard

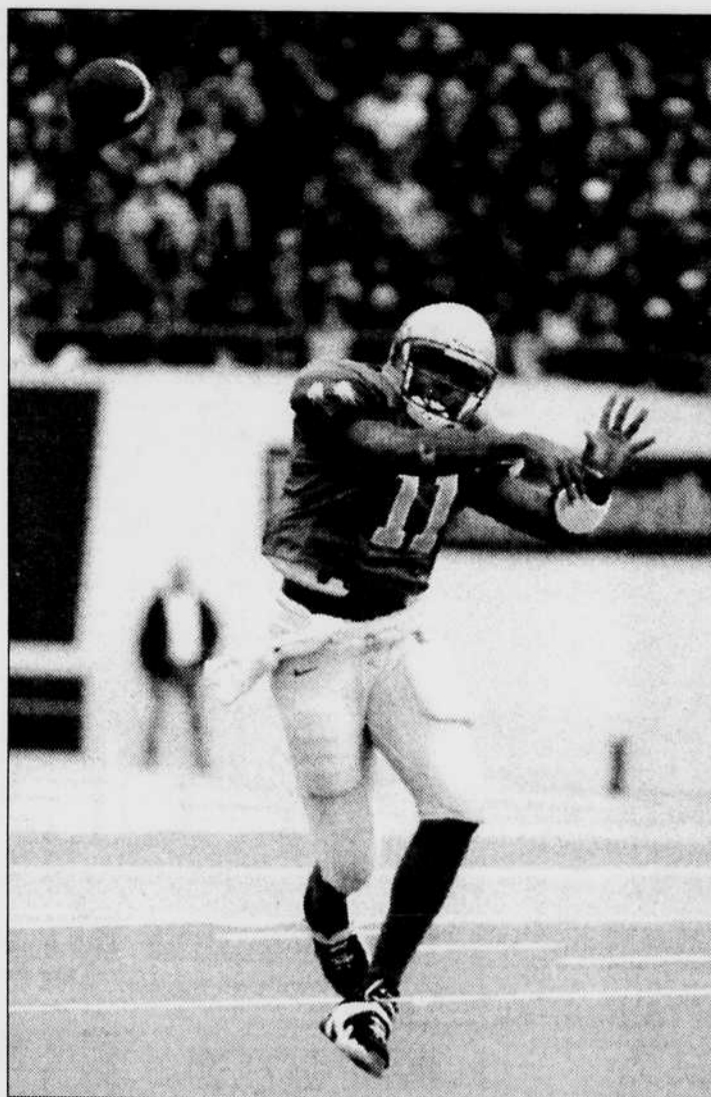
Abrams field goal. Abrams had previously missed from 28 and 36 yards out in the first quarter and also missed a 47-yard attempt in the third quarter.

Oregon took a 3-0 lead 45 seconds into the second quarter on a 23-yard field goal by Nathan Villegas, who broke two school records on the day. Villegas is now a perfect 12 of 12 on field goal attempts this season, breaking the record set by Matt McLeod from 1984-86, while his 37-consecutive successful extra point attempts broke the record set by Gregg McCallum in 1989.

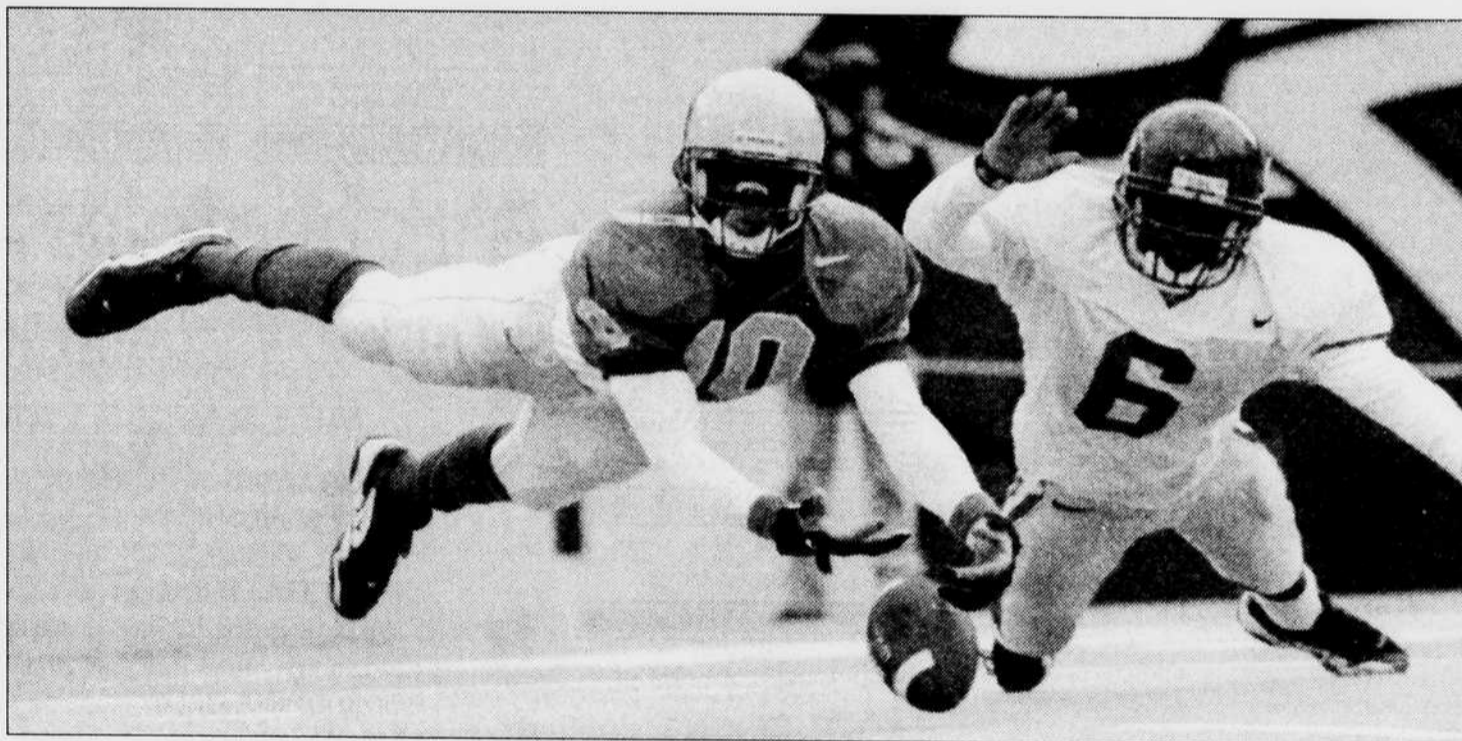
The game was a bit of a departure from the norm for the Ducks, who were averaging 48.5 points a game this season. Instead of a wild shootout, like last week's 41-38 overtime loss at No. 2 UCLA, the Oregon defense was forced to make up for a lackluster performance by the Droughns-less offense, which was averaging 522.8 yards per game but mustered just 394 on Saturday.

"That's as outstanding an effort as I could imagine or hope for," Bellotti said of the Oregon defense. "They came to play today."

Chris Vandiver tallied 11 tackles, one for a loss, to lead the Ducks.



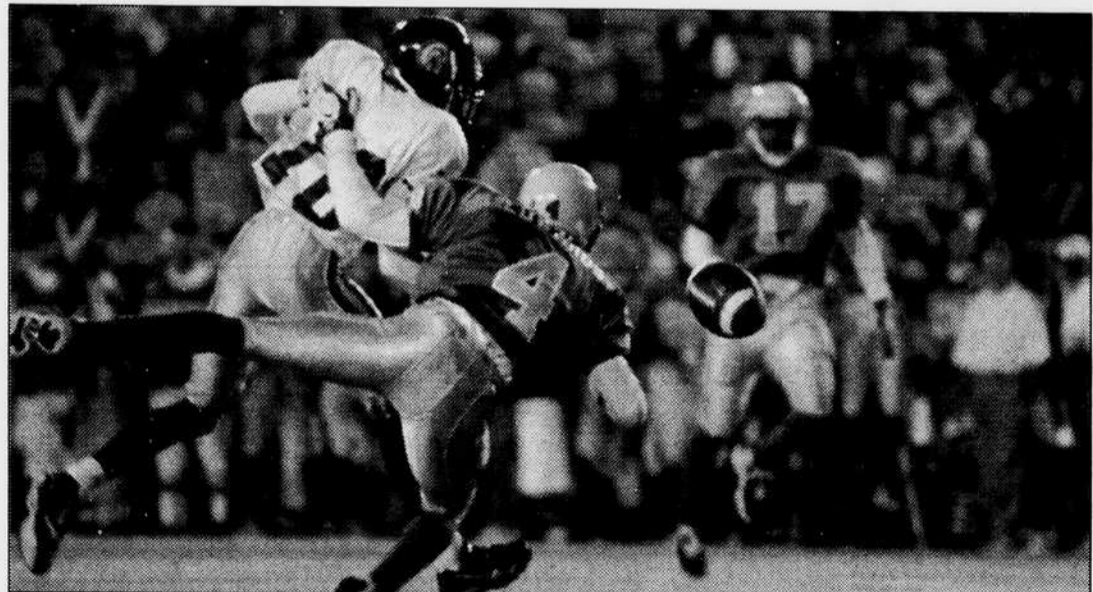
Akili Smith's performance in the fourth quarter gave Oregon the win over the Trojans.



Matt Hankins/Emerald

The Ducks did everything they could to shut down R. Jay Soward. Oregon tailback Derien Latimer had a hand in holding Soward to only 19 yards for the game.

## Soward



R. Jay Soward gets a pass ripped from his hands by Oregon cornerback Eric Edwards.

Matt Hankins/Emerald

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This game did not mark the first time that Soward, a second-team All-Pacific-10 Conference selection last season, struggled against Oregon. In USC's 24-22 win in 1997, Oregon was able to limit Soward to 72 all-purpose yards and one touchdown.

But Saturday, the Ducks' special teams and defense bottled up Soward as never before. The 19 yards of all-purpose production represent a new career low for Soward, a junior from Fontana, Calif., who has been nominated for the nation's top wide receiver honor, the Biletnikoff Award.

Bauman said Soward's inability to make his trademark big plays should be a point of pride for the Oregon defense.

"R. Jay is awesome," Bauman said. "This kid has it all. I take that as a compliment to me and

the defense as a whole to go out and stop a guy like R. Jay."

Edwards, who intercepted a deep pass from Trojan quarterback Mike Van Raaphorst, that was intended for Soward in the first quarter, felt that USC's offense was too easy to read.

"A lot of times I thought their offense became predictable," Edwards said. "When R. Jay came out [wide], I figured he was running deep every time, so that made it a lot easier on me. I could just turn and run with the guy."

Michael Fletcher had a firsthand view of the job Edwards and Bauman did on Soward.

"He's dangerous, one of the most dangerous men in the country," Fletcher said. "We left our corners out on the island, and Rashad and Eric played awesome games. They gave up no deep balls, and that's the way to respond."