

Ducks

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Huskies' leading rusher against the Ducks in 1997.

"It's scary," Bellotti said. "They have two veteran quarterbacks. Brock Huard is a great passer, and Marques Tuiasosopo is a great athlete who is leading their team in rushing, so he's ob-

viously a very dangerous threat."

Tuiasosopo does in fact lead the team in rushing with 307 yards on 37 carries. A quarterback leading a team in rushing usually signals problems at tailback, something Bellotti is experiencing himself.

Since Reuben Droughns went

out with a broken leg suffered against UCLA on Oct. 17, Oregon tailbacks have averaged just 3.2 yards per carry against Southern California and Arizona.

Junior Derien Latimer is again listed as the starter, although freshman Herman Ho-Ching could see action Saturday. Ho-

Ching has been sidelined for nearly two months with a knee injury but has been practicing at full speed recently in hopes he can play against Washington.

The pressure will also be on Smith, especially considering the strength of the Huskies' pass rush. Washington is first in the

Pac-10 in quarterback sacks with 47 this season, 18 ahead of second-place Arizona, which has played one more game than the Huskies. The Wildcats led the Pac-10 last season with 47 sacks in 11 games.

Saturday's game time was moved up a half-hour for ABC.

Smith

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Do you think about playing in the NFL?

It's been a goal of mine ever since I was a little kid; I always tried to watch all the games on Sunday, but my dad always made me go to church.

Did the incident at the Mill Camp give people the wrong impression of you?

Yes, it did. And I had to work real hard to rebuild my character. I talked to a lot of people about that, my coaches and my teammates, about trying to get my respect back. It was just a matter of putting my focus back into football, and show everybody that you're working hard and serious about going to a bowl game.

What did you first think when you saw (Register-Guard sports editor) John Conrad's misquote of you after the Las Vegas Bowl last season?

I was a little upset, but I knew in my heart that I never said [that Air Force had a pretty good "white"

defense instead of "WAC" defense]. As a matter of fact I was at home over the Christmas holiday when some of my friends and coach Mike Bellotti called

me to tell me what happened. I was stunned. I couldn't believe he would write something like that. Ever since that happened, things just seemed to go downhill for me.

What did you think about the public's reaction?

It was really pretty much an overreaction. Donald Haynes was out here, and he had a female come up to him, and the first thing she said was, "Did you see what Akili said in the paper?" I was like, "Wow." I was a little upset at first because people were beginning to see me in a whole new light. I'm not a racist at all, and I was glad that Bellotti and my teammates stuck up for me.

There are at least 10 black quarterbacks who start now for college football teams ranked in the top 25. That's a pretty remarkable fact, considering the stereotypes that existed not too long ago about black quarterbacks. Is this just the evolution of the game?

That's what it is — a revolution. African-Americans are now being sought after at quarterback because of their athletic ability. The position in college and in the NFL has changed so much, you've got to be mobile in that pocket.

When people talk about you they usually say you're the "best athlete" to ever play quarterback at Oregon. Do you feel that African-American quarterbacks are stereotyped in that way? People refer to them as athletes more so than quarterbacks.

We are stereotyped as athletes instead of quarterbacks. To be an African-American quarterback you have to be prepared to fight those stereotypes. Back in the day, the quarterback was always the tall white guy with the strong arm who was smart. But now the game is changing. You have to be quick.



SMITH

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