

Aaron Chevront (34) wraps up Arizona State's Matt Cercone.

Nick Medley/Emerald

Football

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That pass made Smith the single-season record holder for touchdown passes at Oregon with 23.

The Sun Devils answered back in dramatic fashion on a 57-yard touchdown run by J.R. Redmond that recalled last season, when the Sun Devils ran over, around and through the Oregon defense.

"That was the first film I looked at when I got here last spring," first-year Oregon defensive coordinator Bob Foster said. "In fact, I looked at it a couple of times, and coach Bellotti came into my office to see if I was OK because of all the noise I was making. It was pretty ugly the way they manhandled us last year and ran the football."

But that would be the only touchdown the Sun Devils would score until the final minute of the game, as the Ducks allowed just 59 yards on the ground after that first drive.

"Our defensive front seven did a great job of stepping up and stopping the run," Bellotti said. "That first play was a great wake-up call for us. That made our kids mad and got us focused on what we need to do to be successful."

Apparently that means keeping

the ball in Smith's hands. In his final appearance at Autzen Stadium, the senior admitted he had tears in his eyes before the game.

It was all business after Redmond's touchdown, however.

Smith threw six times, completed four, and ran for 26 yards to set up a 22-yard scoring pass to Collins. After Garrett Sabol recovered Sun Devil Lenzie Jackson's fumble on the ensuing kickoff,



MOORE

Smith got the Arizona State cornerback to bite on a hitch-and-go and hit Damon Griffin for a 35-yard touchdown, and the route was on.

"It feels good to beat them real bad, because last year they kicked our butts," said Griffin, who missed all of last year with an injured thumb.

Arizona State got two field goals from Stephen Baker in the second quarter, but Oregon made sure it had the momentum going into halftime when Smith connected with Tony Hartley on a 58-

yard bomb that gave the Ducks a 31-13 lead at the break.

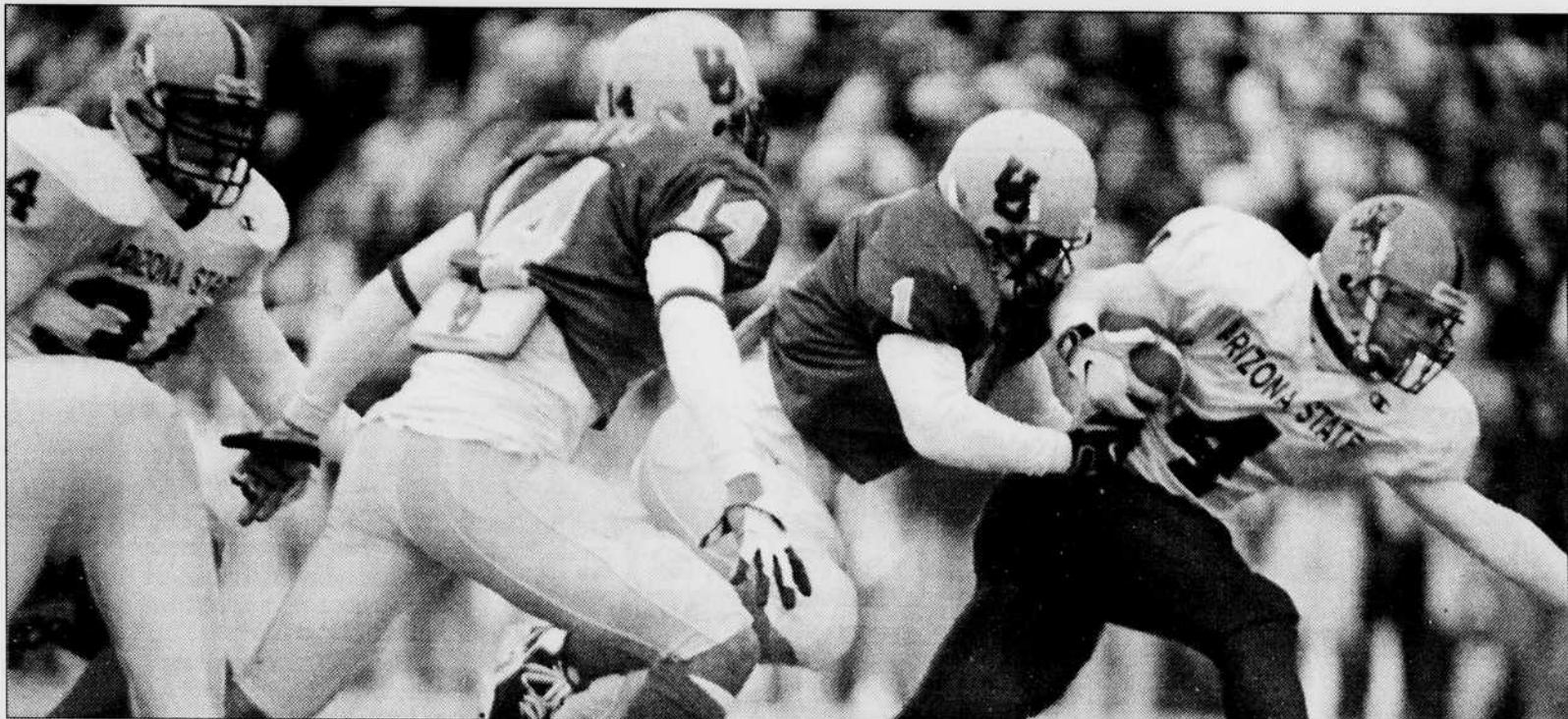
Villegas hit two more field goals, from 36 and 28 yards, for the only scoring in the third quarter, but the Duck offense rallied again in the fourth quarter.

Ho-Ching ran seven times on Oregon's first drive of the fourth quarter, in which the Ducks were mostly trying to run out the clock. His seventh and final rush was a two-yard scoring run, the first for Oregon since Smith's 62-yard jaunt against Southern California on Oct. 24.

Oregon's final touchdown came with just more than five minutes remaining, when linebacker Dietrich Moore picked off an errant Steve Campbell pass and returned it 78 yards for the score.

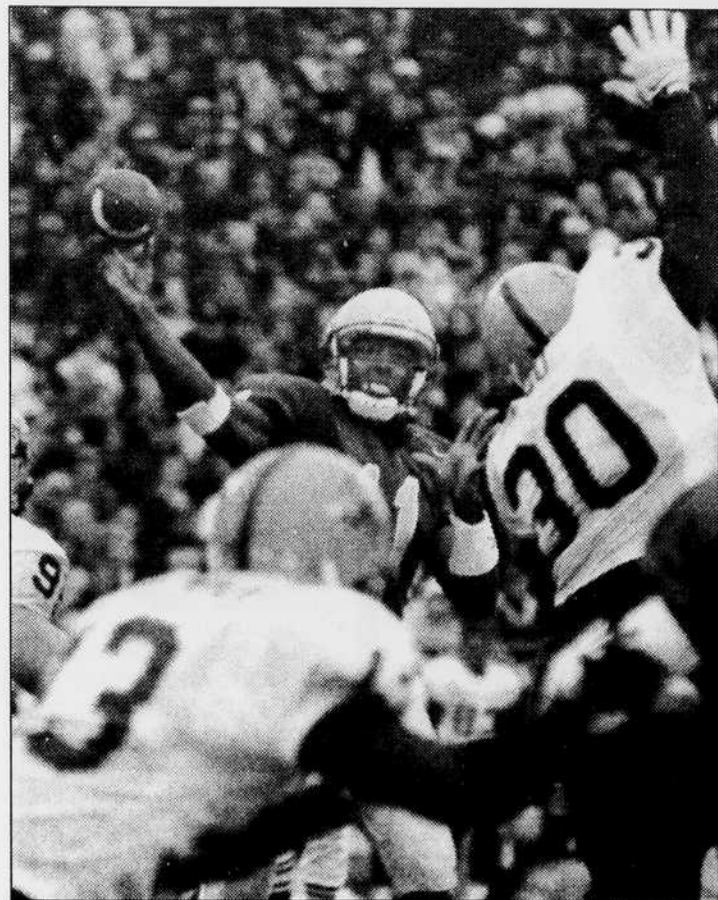
Campbell connected with Tariq McDonald for the Sun Devils' only score of the second half with 1:05 remaining but threw incomplete on the two-point conversion.

Campbell, who completed 11 of 24 passes for 217 yards, started in place of sophomore Ryan Kealy, who underwent knee surgery on Nov. 9.



Oregon's Steve Smith and Michael Fletcher take down Arizona State's Justin Taplin.

Amanda Conway/Emerald



Akili Smith passes under heavy pressure in the last quarter. Smith passed for 397 yards during Saturday's game.

Nick Medley/Emerald

Hood

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decisions and a rocket arm that will undoubtedly make him a hot topic at the NFL combine workouts later this year.

Smith went on to throw three more touchdowns in the Ducks' 51-19 romp over the Sun Devils at Autzen Stadium, bringing to a close one of the great single-game performances by any quarterback to ever wear an Oregon uniform.

Smith—zip!—13 yards to Donald Haynes, Smith—zip!—27 yards to LaCorey Collins, Smith—zip!—35 yards to Damon Griffin, Smith—zip!—55 yards to Jed Weaver, Smith—zip!—58 yards to Tony Hartley. Suddenly it's very clear that you're watching not only the best quarterback in the Pac-10, not only the best quarterback to ever play for Oregon, but just maybe the best quarterback in the country.

After the game, Smith seemed to be the only one not caught up by his performance.

"No question, Akili's the best quarterback in the conference," Arizona State cornerback Courtney Jackson said. "The worst thing that can happen to a de-

"It's very clear that you're watching not only the best quarterback in the Pac-10, but just maybe the best quarterback in the country."

fense is have Akili run and improvise with the offense. We would have been better off if he had just dropped back to pass."

Sun Devil head coach Bruce Snyder said he's never really seen anything like it.

"I cannot say enough about Akili Smith and how he played, not only today, which was pretty spectacular, but all year long," he said. "I really admire how he played."

With 397 yards passing, 32 yards on the ground and four touchdown passes on Saturday, Smith has put himself into position for the greatest single-season output by any Duck quarterback in history. With one regular-sea-

son game remaining and a bowl game on the horizon, Smith stands just 347 yards from Danny O'Neil's Oregon passing record of 3,224 set in 1993. His 26 touchdown passes are already way ahead of the pack. O'Neil's record for total offense, 3,087 yards, is only a matter of time.

Moreover, it was important that Smith broke the touchdown record at home, where Duck fans have been both overwhelmingly critical and supportive of him throughout his two-year stay in Eugene.

Before the game, as Smith walked down Autzen Stadium's tunnel to the playing field, he stopped for a moment and wiped tears from his eyes, suddenly realizing that he was making this walk for the last time.

There's no question that Duck fans will surely miss Smith next season. And after two exciting, tumultuous years, it seems Smith will miss Eugene as well.

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