

Smith

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Churchill High School to the state title and being named Oregon's 4A player of the year in 1995, Smith decided to make the short journey across town to McArthur Court.

But his scholarship came with a catch.

After playing his freshman year on scholarship, Smith had to sit out the next year and pay his own way for school because the Ducks had already committed all of their available scholarships.

"It was a bit of a risk," Smith says, "but it was something that I thought in the best-case scenario would pay off right for me. I was too confident in myself just to go someplace else that I didn't think would have been the best for me."

Indeed, the risk has paid off.

Following that redshirt season, Smith returned to active duty and became Oregon's sixth man in Kent's first season. While playing an average of 22 minutes per game, Smith contributed more than 10 points and four rebounds an outing. Those totals were both good for third on the team.

That steady improvement has continued this season as Smith has scored in double digits in 11 of 13 games and grabbed more than 10 rebounds on three separate occasions.

Teammate Donte Quinine, who arrived at Oregon at the same time as Smith, says the biggest change in Smith's style of play has been his newfound confidence in his jumpshot.

"He used to like to post up a lot more, but now he has a lot more confidence in shooting the three-pointer," Quinine says. "He has become a lot more versatile since he has an inside-outside combination to his game."

When the Pac-10 season started, Smith found himself the focal point of opponents' defensive efforts. After scoring in double digits in all nine nonconference games, Smith was held to just eight and

seven points in the Ducks' conference-opening road trip to the Bay Area. In the overtime win at California, however, Smith did secure a career-high 14 rebounds and three assists.

But his low-scoring outputs in those games did not come close to matching the disappointment he would feel following Oregon's next game, the Pac-10 home opener against Southern California.

Despite trailing the entire way, often by double digits, the Trojans stole the game with a late comeback that was capped by Adam Spanich's desperation heave from half-court at the buzzer. But Spanich's answered prayer would not have been possible without a rare mistake by Smith.

Following Spanich's three from the corner that pulled USC within two points as the final seconds ticked down, Smith took the ball out of bounds and passed deep down the court as Kent had directed. But Smith's pass did not travel as far as was planned and Spanich intercepted to set the stage for his dramatics.

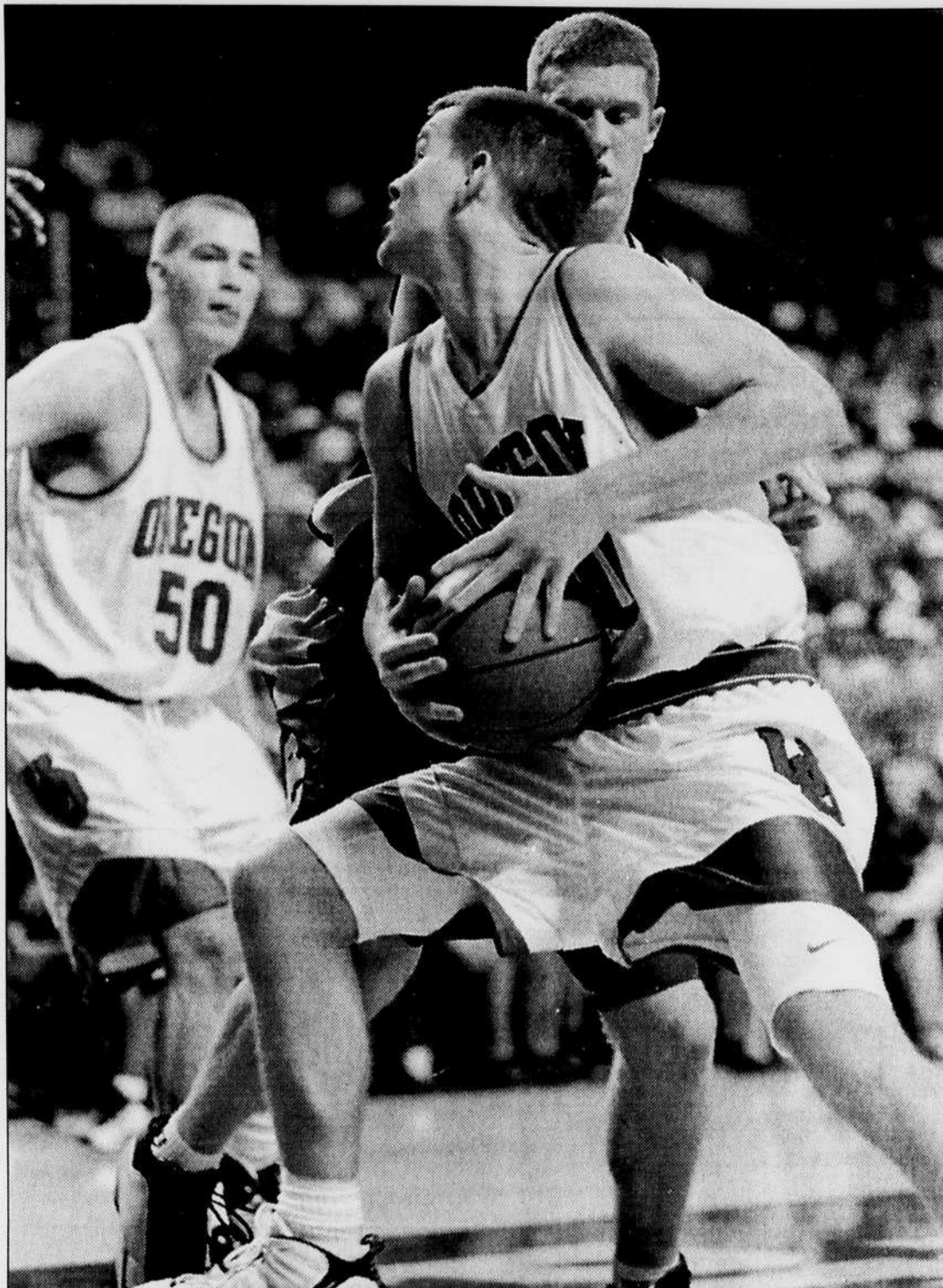
"I'm not one to ever think a game is over, but I thought that game was over," Smith says. "It was a tough one to deal with."

Two days later against then-No. 7 UCLA, Smith bounced back with 16 points on five-of-seven shooting and five rebounds, but his efforts were diminished by the Bruins' 65-63 victory.

As Oregon (9-4 overall, 1-3 Pac-10) prepares to head north to battle Washington State and Washington and hoping to end its three-game losing streak, Smith says being on the court is the best remedy for the bad dream Spanich created.

"At least now we have more games left and a long season ahead of us," Smith says. "If that's the last game of the year, it's going to be tough."

Rest assured, Smith will think up a better ending than that one.



Nick Medley/Emerald

By combining an inside and outside scoring touch, Smith ranks second on the Ducks in scoring, with nearly 14 points a game.

Sports Brief

Holmgren says Moon won't get third season

SEATTLE — New Seahawks Coach Mike Holmgren just got here, but one local newspaper says Holmgren's already decided quarterback Warren Moon won't get a third season in Seattle.

Moon will be released Feb. 12, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer reported Tuesday.

Moon's agent said it was the first he and Moon had heard about it.

Seahawks spokesman Dave Pearson said he was in the same boat.

"Warren has not been informed that this is the case," said agent Leigh Steinberg from his Los Angeles-area office.

"He's ready, willing and able to help Seattle, and we're expecting that's what will happen."

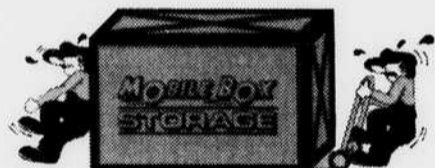
Moon, 42, signed a two-year contract in August after the first holdout of his 15-year NFL career. The P-I reported that an early release would require him to repay

half the \$562,000 signing bonus that went with the deal.

"It's not a half — it's a quarter, if that would happen," Steinberg said.

But he insisted it's not. At 42, "there hasn't been any real dropoff in Warren's performance level," Steinberg said. He noted that "if one looks at the four quarterbacks in the finals, they're all players who are older and more mature."

— The Associated Press



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