

Seniors workout for NFL clubs

Quarterback Akili Smith worked out for as many as 20 NFL scouts Friday

By Rob Moseley
Oregon Daily Emerald

A group of Oregon seniors highlighted by quarterback Akili Smith worked out Friday for a group of 15 to 20 NFL scouts at the Ed Moshofsky indoor facility.

Smith, expected to be a high first-round pick in the upcoming NFL draft, participated in just two drills, the 40-yard dash and a passing drill in which he threw every conceivable route before a crowd of about 75 onlookers.

"I'm just relaxing and having fun, and we'll see what my agent has to say about the feedback," Smith said.

Smith's agent, possibly the most visible in the business, is Leigh Steinberg, who also represents NFL quarterbacks such as Steve Young and Troy Aikman.

Smith completed every single pass to receivers Pat Johnson, a former Duck now playing for the NFL's Baltimore Ravens, and fellow prospects Jed Weaver, Kevin Parker, Damon Griffin and Anthony Martin, a defensive lineman who may move to tight end.

"This was a fireworks display," Steinberg said. "It was really a wonderful tryout in terms of velocity on the ball, accuracy and quick release. This was an opportunity to see Akili up close and personal, and I think he's worked his way up so that he's

probably in position to be one of the top three of four picks in the first round."

A few mock drafts even list Smith as high as second, to the Philadelphia Eagles, a pick Smith said the Seattle Seahawks may try to acquire through a trade.

The Pacific-10 Conference co-player of the year admitted such talk is keeping him up at night.

"It weighs on me a lot, but I'm just trying to kick back and relax and try not to think about it too much," Smith said.

Smith is one of a large group of quarterbacks expected to be picked in the first two rounds when the draft takes place April 17 and 18.

Kentucky's Tim Couch is expected to be chosen first by the expansion Cleveland Browns, with Central Florida's Dante Culpepper, Syracuse's Donovan McNabb and UCLA's Cade McNown joining Smith as possible high first-round picks.

"It's just a question of individual teams here having the chance to meet and interact with him," Steinberg said. "They're going to be impressed by his personality and his football acumen and knowledge."

Jason Maas also participated in the throwing drills, while cornerback Eric Edwards and offensive lineman Marco Aguirre also worked out.

The scouts, representing more than half of the NFL teams, including the Super Bowl-champi-

on Denver Broncos and losers Atlanta Falcons, measured the players' broad and vertical jumps and timed their 40-yard dashes, shuttle runs and a figure-eight drill.

Edwards ran the fastest 40 of the day, a 4.47, and Martin impressed with his jumps, but what all the scouts obviously came to see was the mechanics of the quarterback who is projected by many to be picked as high as second.

Smith threw long bombs, quick outs, slants and screens, showing off his arm strength, timing, touch and accuracy.

Punter Josh Bidwell worked out earlier in the day for the Green Bay Packers, and will do the same for Miami on Monday.

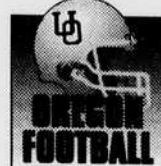
Packers scouts watched Bidwell run through situational kicks, testing his accuracy and placement. Bidwell said the drills had to be run outdoors at Autzen Stadium because he would be likely to get the footballs stuck in the rafters of the Moshofsky building.

At the scouting combine earlier this year at Indianapolis, Bidwell said the teams were mainly interested in testing his leg strength. The All-American was told he was the best punter at the combine, Bidwell said.

The other Ducks were in Indianapolis as well, with Friday's workout serving as a chance to improve on those earlier performances. Edwards said he had run a 40 in the 4.6 range, while Aguirre was looking to improve his times in the foot-work drills like the shuttle run.

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UO earns three All-American honors

Pole vaulter Karina Elstrom set a personal best at 12 feet, 7 1/2 inches

By Scott Pesznecker
Oregon Daily Emerald

Three All-American honors were earned by members of the Oregon men's and women's track and field teams at the NCAA Indoor Championships, held in Indianapolis on Friday and Saturday.

The rest of the Oregon women's team opened its outdoor season at the Linfield Icebreaker in McMinnville on Saturday.

Pole vaulter Karina Elstrom became the Ducks' first All-American this season by clearing 12 feet, 7 1/2 inches during Friday's competition. Elstrom made her opening attempts at her first three heights before falling at 12-10, which is her personal best.

"It feels like everything has paid off, everything I worked for," Elstrom said in a released statement. "I had a feeling it would. Last year when I came to the NCAA Indoor meet I was really disoriented, while this year it felt really comfortable from the start."

Senior Kaarin Knudson finished eighth in the mile on Saturday with a personal-best time of 4 minutes, 43.88 seconds, to earn the second All-American honor of her career. It was Knudson's first appearance at an NCAA indoor meet.

Knudson's time put her in fifth place on Oregon's all-time mile list, behind former NCAA champion Leann Warren's fourth-place time of 4:30.36.

On the men's side, junior Steve Fein won All-American honors in the 3,000 meters. Fein crossed the line in seventh with a time of 7:58.51 and was one of nine runners to finish below eight minutes.

"Even though I wanted to finish higher, today was a good learning experience," Fein said. "I need to focus my strength more on racing up in the front instead of passing people at the end like I have in the past."

Teammate Micah Davis followed in 15th place in his NCAA indoor debut.

At the Linfield Icebreaker, the women claimed top finishes and solid marks to open their spring outdoor season.

Freshman Alexis Yeater debuted on the outdoor circuit with wins in the 100 meters (12.11) and 200 meters (25.15).

Following Yeater in the sprints, Oregon's Hilary Holly (12.43), Alisha Wallace (12.44) and Taryn Tarver (12.48) swept second, third and fourth places in the 100 meters. Wallace also took second in the 200 meters with a time of 25.42.

Senior Melissa Abramson won the 400-meter hurdles (1:04.93) and finished second in the 100-meter hurdles (15.26) behind teammate Katie Rowlett (15.09).

Heidi Fisk posted double victories in the throws, winning the discus (152-11) and shot put (44-3). The Ducks swept first through third place in the javelin, led by Tasha Cooper's distance of 137-0.

The men's and women's teams will officially open the outdoor track season at the Oregon Preview, held on March 13 at Hayward Field.



Sports Briefs

Ducks impressive at Easton Tournament

In showcasing its considerable talents at the Easton Showcase Tournament in Fullerton, Calif., during the weekend, the No.15 Oregon softball team won five of six games.

Friday, the Ducks (16-6) opened the tournament with a 6-1 win over Santa Clara.

Later that afternoon, Oregon's

offense was stifled by Northwestern in a 3-1 loss. The Ducks managed just six hits.

Saturday, Oregon recovered with a 12-4 win over Illinois State.

In game two of the day, the Ducks held off Cal-State Fullerton for a 4-3 victory. Oregon was led by Cook's pitching.

Sunday, the Ducks concluded the tournament with two more wins. Oregon disposed of Auburn, 6-2, and Pacific, 6-4.

Women's tennis aces Washington schools

Facing No. 42 Washington Sunday afternoon, the Oregon women's tennis team earned its second upset of the weekend, beating the Huskies 5-4 in Seattle.

Oregon's No. 1 singles player, junior Alina Wygonowska, beat the nation's No. 16 player.

On Friday, Oregon defeated No. 52 Washington State, 5-3.

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