

Thomas Patterson Emerald

Onterio Smith (2), Josh Line (47) and Jared Siegel (25) celebrate after Siegel hit the game-winning field goal Saturday.

Freshman kicker shines in the end

■ With the game on the line, Oregon turned to freshman kicker Jared Siegel — and he delivered

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

While Joey Harrington completed clutch pass after clutch pass in that memorable last minute drive, there were two kickers on the Oregon sideline preparing to end the game in dramatic fashion.

One was Jared Siegel, the true freshman from Sacramento, Calif., who had missed an earlier second quarter field goal.

The other was David Rosenberg, the junior transfer from Calabasas, Calif., who had a field goal attempt blocked late in the fourth quarter.

"We have two great kickers, and I have confidence in both," head coach Mike Bellotti said.

Bellotti had told both of them to be ready and saved the decision of who to go with until the final tense moments.

"He grabbed me and said, 'You're kicking it,' and then about five seconds later he yelled, 'Field goal!,'" Siegel said. "So I just went out there and let it fly."

Let it fly he did, as the 32-yard field goal sailed through the uprights to clinch his team's 24-22 come-from-behind victory Saturday night against USC and send the fresh-faced freshman on top of the arms of his adoring teammates.

"Put me down, put me down. I'm just doing my job, nothing special," Siegel could be heard saying to his teammates as he rode the hero ride.

But afterwards, once he was away from the stadium atmosphere and out of uniform, the reality of a game-winning field goal in a Pacific-10 Conference game began to sink in.

"As a kicker, you dream about the opportunity to pull through

and win one for your team," Siegel said. "You go to bed at night dreaming about it. You go to practice and dream about it. So when it finally came true, you've seen it a thousand times already in your head; it's almost like deja vu when it happens in real life."

What made the kick that much sweeter for Siegel was that he was able to redeem himself from his earlier miss, which he admitted was "kind of a mental error on my part."

And as Siegel jogged onto the field with the clock showing 0:16 and with 45,765 nervous eyes zeroed on him, he was greeted by teammate George Wrihster.

"George's helpful advice before the kick was, 'Siegel, don't miss. Put it through the pipes,'" Siegel said.

"As a kicker, you dream about the opportunity to pull through and win one for your team."

Jared Siegel
kicker, Oregon

"George said a little something to him, and I was about to pull him away," said Harrington, the holder on all field goal attempts. "It's bad luck. You never say anything to the kicker."

"But I never doubted that he was going to make it. Jared is a picture of composure for a freshman."

So now Siegel goes down in the Oregon history books, just as Josh Frankel did in the Ducks' 33-30 triple-overtime victory against the Trojans in 1999, as the hero who ended a thriller.

But what next? In just his third collegiate game, Siegel has fulfilled one of his ultimate dreams.

"Now you dream about putting it through again when it counts," he said.

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"We knew when we got the ball back with [0:56], we knew we'd do it," said senior tight end Justin Peelle, who had two touchdown catches. "I wish we could do it earlier and stop with this crap, but we'll take it. We've just done it so many times and have that swagger, that confidence in ourselves."

"I had a gang of confidence" (that we were going to win), sophomore tailback Onterio Smith said. "I told the defense we needed one big stop at the end, and that's what they did. And when the offense took the field, I looked in Joey's eyes and saw how relaxed he was, so I knew it was going to be no problem going down there and getting one in."

The Ducks did have problems keeping a lead, though. Harrington's only touchdown pass of the day, a 21-yarder to Peelle, gave the Ducks a 21-6 lead early in the third quarter. From there, the USC of-

fense exploded.

McCullough scored on a 75-yard screen pass from Palmer with 6:12 remaining in third, and on the first play of the fourth quarter, Palmer hit receiver Kareem Kelly for a 93-yard score, the longest offensive play in Autzen Stadium history.

Then, at the 10:36 mark in the fourth, David Davis hit a 39-yard field goal to put the Trojans ahead 22-21, where it would stand until the game's final drive.

Despite the two big plays, Oregon's defense played arguably its best game of the season, holding the Trojans to 40 total yards on the ground (on 32 carries). Defensive back Steve Smith, who struggled in the first two games of the season, had three interceptions, tying the Autzen record, one returned for a touchdown.

"I am still singing the praises about the defense," head coach Mike Bellotti said. "We stopped the run, forced the pass and got the turnovers. I feel like we made a pos-

itive step today because I think we can take care of the mistakes that allowed the big touchdowns. We proved that we can stop a Pac-10 team running the ball."

Oregon opened the scoring on a trick play in the first quarter. Onterio Smith took a pitch and threw a perfect spiral to a wide-open Peelle for a 35-yard score.

Climbing back from two sub-par performances, Oregon tailback Maurice Morris rushed for 86 yards on 15 carries.

Before play began, however, a few words — and punches — were exchanged between the two clubs. With the USC marching band in the way, Trojan players took the field before the game by running through the Oregon players. Several Ducks took offense, including senior defensive back Rashad Bauman, who got into a pushing match with USC's Antuan Simmons.

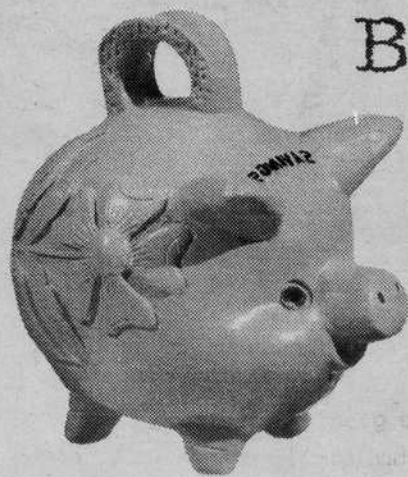
"The emotions were real high tonight," Onterio Smith said. "We were playing with a lot of heart."

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