

Onterrio puts 'Oh!' in Oregon's offense Saturday

Running back Onterrio Smith keys the Ducks with 285 rushing yards against Washington State

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

PULLMAN, Wash. — Imagine what Onterrio Smith could do if he played an entire game.

Oregon's sophomore tailback broke Ahmad Rashad's 30-year-old school record with 285 yards rushing Saturday, while his 343 all-purpose yards also broke a school record set by Rashad in 1971 and tied by Oregon receiver Keenan Howry last week against Stanford. Smith broke Rashad's rushing record by 36 yards.

And Smith, the backup tailback, did it all in three quarters in Oregon's 24-17 victory against the previously 14th-ranked Washington State Cougars.

"I can't wait to get back to my bed," Smith said after his 26 rushes.

Unlike Howry's 338 all-purpose yards the previous Saturday, which came in a 49-42 loss to Stanford, Smith's performance will not be overlooked.

"It feels good, especially, first of all, to get the win," Smith said. "It wasn't all about the school record — that's great and all, but the most important thing was to come out

and get the win."

Starting tailback Maurice Morris began the ground assault with 76 yards on 11 carries in the first quarter.

"I think they both might have had over 200 had Maurice been able to play," head coach Mike Bellotti said.

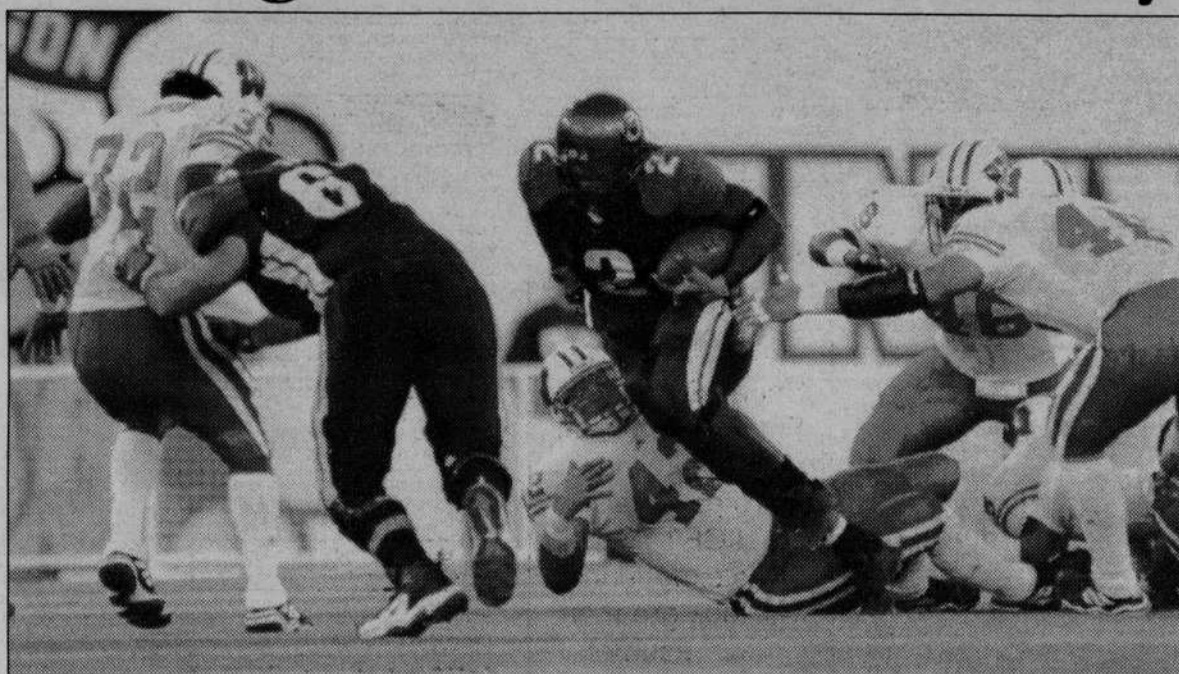
Asked about a controversy at tailback, Bellotti said, "The only reason (Smith) would start is if Maurice is hurt. I think we're blessed with one of the best one-two punches in not only the conference, but the nation."

Smith's first touch of the game came on a kickoff return at the 10:40 mark of the second quarter. His first touch at the tailback position was a 27-yard run on the second play of Oregon's second drive of the second quarter.

Six plays later, on a second-and-goal from the Washington State seven-yard line, Smith came face-to-face with Cougar safety Billy Newman, with Newman ending up on his back and Smith ending up in the end zone for the Ducks' first score of the game.

"Unbelievable," center Ryan Schmid said. "He's amazing."

Prior to Saturday's game, the Washington State defense — which was ranked first in the Pac-10 against the run — had only allowed 93 yards per game on the ground. Oregon netted 446 yards on the ground Saturday. Combined, Stanford's (219 yards), Montana State's (134) and Arizona's (76) total rushing yards against the Cougars were less than Oregon's total Saturday.



Adam Amato Emerald

Onterrio Smith (2) rushed for a school-record 285 yards against Washington State. He broke the old record by 36 yards.

"We knew we had to run the ball well today and we did,"

Howry said. "Given the opportunity and the time, anybody's capable of doing anything. Today was Onterrio's day."

With his record-setting day, does Smith expect a call from Rashad, otherwise known as Bobby Moore, the former Oregon running back who rushed for 1,295 yards in 1971?

"I know him. In fact, I played with his son," Smith said of the NBC television show host and his son, Ahmad Rashad Jr. "My freshman year (of high school) I moved up to varsity and played with (his son). I met him. He came to a couple of our games."

Maybe Rashad will now come to a couple more.

WSU quarterback Gesser says his team is 'better' than UO's

Jason Gesser said the Cougars lost Saturday's game more than the Ducks won it

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

PULLMAN, Wash. — Jason Gesser believes the best team on the slick Martin Stadium surface Saturday didn't win.

The junior Washington State quarterback didn't hide his frustration after his Cougars were knocked out of the unbeaten ranks by underdog Oregon, 24-17.

"We are a better team than Oregon," said Gesser, who was 17-of-37 for 249 yards. "But we didn't play better today."

Washington State could have been alone atop the Pacific-10 Conference standings had it come away with a victory. With UCLA losing at Stanford earlier Saturday, the Cougars knew that they were in control of their own destiny.

In fact, Washington State could have moved higher up in the national championship picture on a day when four undefeated teams lost, leaving only Miami, Nebraska and BYU unbeaten in the top 25.

Instead, the Ducks helped jumble up the Pac-10, which now has five teams with only one loss.

"We don't want to feel like this again," said Cougar safety Lamont Thompson, who had a career-high 17 tackles. "We have a lot of heart and character on this team, and hopefully we will bounce back. We have another tough team coming up next week."

That team would be UCLA, which will enter Martin Stadium with running back DeShaun Foster next weekend. Think the Cougars' defense will be working on stopping the run in practice this week? They don't want Foster to have the kind of game that Oregon tailbacks Onterrio

Smith and Maurice Morris had.

Smith had a field day and finished with an Oregon school record of 285 yards, while Morris set the tone early and wound up with 138 against a Cougar defense that entered Saturday as the best run defense in the league.

In fact, the average of 93 yards rushing per game that Washington State had allowed was the 13th best mark in the nation.

The 446 yards on the ground for the Ducks, including Joey Harrington's 23 yards, was an embarrassing statistic to the prideful Cougar defense, which probably focused more preparation time on how to contain Harrington and his receivers.

"That was a ridiculous amount of yards, and it's not going to get any easier next week with DeShaun Foster," safety Billy Newman said. "I thought they would come out and try to pass with their Heisman candidate. Onterrio is an excellent running back."

Newman had a great view of Smith's first of three touchdowns on the day.

At the 7:23 mark of the second quarter, Smith ran up the gut, Newman greeted him for the tackle, but Smith just ran right over the senior defensive stalwart to put Oregon on top, 7-3.

Smith was just beginning, later tacking on a 41-yard touchdown scamper in the third quarter to extend the lead to 14-3, and then add a potential back-breaker in the fourth.

With less than six minutes left, Smith padded his statistics even more with his 73-yard sprint to the goal line that left the Cougars shaking their heads in astonishment.

"He was pretty elusive," defensive lineman Rien Long said. "Their offensive line didn't come out and put us on our backs. I don't know how, but he just got out there."

So with the defense having trouble all day containing Oregon, it was up to the Washington State offense, ranked first in the Pac-10, to make something happen. Gesser led a three-play, 70-yard scoring drive that was capped by a 15-yard touchdown pass to Jerome Riley to bring the Cougars to within 24-17 with 4:25 to play, but it wouldn't be enough.

Washington State would get the ball back in the final minute and drive all the way down to the Oregon eight-yard line, but three incomplete passes in the end zone would end their unbeaten season.

Gesser, though, knew that the Cougars' inefficient first half was one of the main reasons for their demise.

"Three points in the first half, that's not us," Gesser said. "We didn't find our rhythm, we didn't find our groove."

And the Cougars didn't find the win Gesser thought they deserved.

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