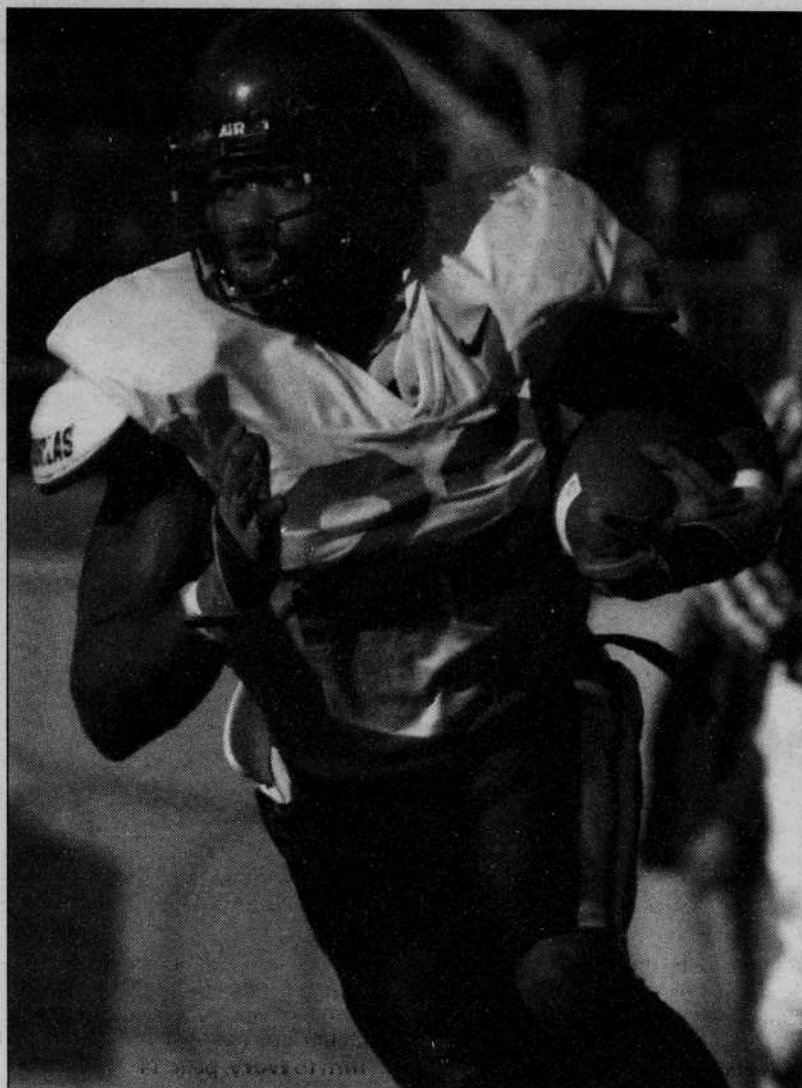


SPORTS

Best bet
NBA Playoffs:
Minnesota at Lakers, Game 6
7 p.m., TNT

Thursday, May 1, 2003



Adam Amato Emerald

Chris Vincent will be heading into fall practices with a chance to earn a starting spot.

Running for No. 1

Chris Vincent has come out of the shadows to battle for the starting spot at running back

Spring football

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

Oregon football head coach Mike Bellotti and running backs coach Gary Campbell have seen some pretty good runners in their days with the Ducks.

From Ricky Whittle to Reuben Droughns, Maurice Morris to Onterio Smith, the duo has been blessed with talented running backs. But now that Smith has graduated to the NFL — albeit one year early — there is a void in the backfield that needs to be filled.

Chris Vincent is looking fill that void quickly, and without question.

If the name doesn't ring a bell, that's no surprise. The 21-year-old redshirt freshman came to Eugene in September after a failed stint with Louisiana State.

After three weeks of workouts with the Ducks, Vincent is beginning to make a name for himself.

"He's played very well," Campbell said. "He's going to be a big, physical guy. He's got real good quickness, and he's elusive in the open field. He's on his way to being a well-rounded player, and he's just got to pick right up where he left off now in the fall and start to really polish up those talents."

The road to get to this point, however, has been a strange one for the Philadelphia native. After starring at Neshaminy High School and graduating in 1999, Vincent needed some work on his grade point average and SAT score. So, he enrolled at Valley Forge Military Academy — located in Wayne, Penn. — as a fifth-year senior.

The prep academy was, as expected, a far more structured program than any football player could receive on the field. Vincent had to wear uniforms, shine his shoes and his belt on an everyday basis, and even had to participate in marching parades.

"I didn't want to go there, but it helped me in the long run," he said. "It helped me get to where I am now. I learned a lot of things about responsibility and time management."

"Those things all have helped him," Bellotti said. After his time there, Vincent was at a crossroads. If he chose to attend a school on the West Coast, it would be with Oregon. But being from the East Coast, Vincent selected LSU.

That turned into a less-than-stellar move. When the Tigers switched Vincent to running back after telling him during the recruiting process he would play safety — his desired position — that was a sign he no longer wanted to stay in the South. So, in September 2002, Vincent came to Oregon.

The catch? He's still playing running back. "LSU had a different style of offense," Vincent said. "It was more passing. Here, they run the ball. Obviously, you've seen the success of Maurice Morris and Onterio Smith, especially as a two-back duo."

With three others at the position — Ryan Shaw, Terrence Whitehead and Kenny Washington — Vincent is in a battle for the starting spot. It's a spot that has been unclaimed so far, especially in the eyes of Bellotti and Campbell.

"I think he's got as a good a chance to start as anybody," Bellotti said. "He's certainly a powerful runner. He reminds me of Reuben Droughns in terms of his ability to break tackles and drag people. He's a very strong individual. With continued practice, he's in the hunt."

Turn to **Football**, page 13

Fife proves spring game theory: It doesn't mean much

Are you ready for some Fife ball? The annual Oregon spring game is really Jason Fife's game. Has been for three years. Inevitably, Fife will throw for a billion yards and hundreds of touchdowns Saturday, he'll ex-or-ciiiise the demons and he'll win the starting job back for next fall.

So basically, wake me at next year's Goober.com Bowl after the Ducks lose to Wichita State.

It's a sad little dance really. At last year's spring game, he missed only three of 15 passes, connected for four touchdowns and threw for 143 yards. In Oregon's first six games in the fall, which were really just five glorified

spring games plus UCLA, he looked great. Fife m u l l e t s popped up a r o u n d Eugene.

But in the second half of the season, Fife turned south like a bird in winter. His receivers suddenly needed go-go-Gadget arms to catch his passes. His spirals turned into wobbles. Touchdowns turned to tips.

Peter Hockaday
Two minutes for crosschecking

You could almost read Keenan Howry's thoughts.

If this guy throws one more ball 10 yards in front of me, I'm gonna take this football back to the huddle and shove it up his nostril.

Fife just gets scalded in the pressure-cooker. He's a very good quarterback and a great guy — I'd rather spend 10 hours kickin' it with Fife than 10 minutes listening to Joey Harrington play jazz piano.

But when it comes to crunch time, Fife is more chewy and soft than crunchy. Harrington played better when he was challenged, and the Ducks need a quarterback like that for next year because they'll be challenged early and of-

ten. Oregon opens at Mississippi State, then has two games before Michigan comes to town and another seven days to prepare for Washington State. Eeesh. No spring games on that schedule.

What we need to do with Jason Fife is rebuild him, like the Six Million Dollar Man. We can do that, right? Didn't the Autzen expansion include a vault for cryogenically frozen DNA? I'm pretty sure it's right behind the "Coach Bellotti's Barbeque" stand.

Here's what we do. Go to the "quarterbacks" section of the vault and start pulling traits from former Oregon signal-callers. Keep Fife's smarts intact, but give

him Harrington's mojo — is there a better way to describe how Golden Boy won so many games? Harrington winning games is exactly like Austin Powers getting women. It's unexplainable; it's just the mojo. Baby.

Fife's got pretty fleet feet, but we'll give him Akili Smith's legs. Give him A.J. Feeley's cannon-arm and Dan Fouts' perseverance.

We can rebuild him... we have the power.

The only positive in the Jason Fife situation is Samie Parker. For some reason, Fife was able to find Parker's No. 1 on the field more often than any other receiver last

Turn to **Hockaday**, page 13

Ellis leads UO golfers to 7th at Pac-10 Championships

Oregon nearly squanders a 13-stroke advantage but holds on to finish seventh

Men's golf

Scott Archer
Freelance Sports Reporter

The unexpected almost happened Wednesday at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships in Glendale, Calif. No, Oregon didn't almost win, nor did they even finish in the top five for that matter. They didn't even move up or down on the final day after finishing seventh overall after three rounds Tuesday.

Oregon did almost move on the leaderboard, but it wouldn't have been a move the team was hoping for.

The Ducks, who entered the final round of the Pac-10 Tournament at the par-72, 6,736-yard Oakmont Country Club in seventh place, nearly squandered a 13-stroke lead to California, before the Ducks edged out the Golden Bears by one stroke.

Oregon finished the four-round tournament 64-over par with a combined score of 1504.

The Ducks were led by senior John Ellis, whose three rounds looked like a stock market graph, concluded the tournament 14th overall, climbing five spots in the final round. Ellis saved his best performance for last, shooting his tourney-best round, a 2-under 70, to ascend the leaderboard. Ellis opened the tournament in 12th place but had a poor third round, where the senior fell to 19th overall before the start of

Turn to **Golf**, page 12John Ellis rebounded with his best round of the week on the final day of the Pac-10 Championships. Ellis finished 14th overall.
Emerald