

RUNNING INTO THE RECORD BOOKS

During his Oregon career, Terrence Whitehead has proved to be a leader both on and off the field

BY SHAWN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

Terrence Whitehead is leaving his mark at Oregon — something few student-athletes have managed to accomplish.

The senior is not only climbing the career charts, but is also the leader in a backfield stacked with talent. Ranking second behind current Minnesota Vikings running back Onterio Smith, Whitehead began his Oregon career as a true freshman in 2002. Whitehead emerged the following season from a four-tailback squad to become the starter in eight of the final nine games of the season and has held on to the spot since.

The Los Angeles native will extend his 16-game starting streak Saturday against his hometown rival Southern California Trojans. Despite minimal recruiting by USC and a slow start to the season, Whitehead isn't focused on himself.

"I'm not going to say I want to beat them because they are the two-time defending champs, I'm not going to say I want to beat them because they didn't recruit me. I want to beat them because they are the next team on our schedule," Whitehead said.

His selfless attitude allows him to lead by example. After beginning the season with only 67 rushing yards on 26 attempts and no touchdowns, Whitehead broke out last weekend during a 37-34 victory over Fresno

State. He finished with 156 total yards and two touchdowns, including the game-winning 42-yard scamper late in the fourth quarter.

"Terrence is a very versatile football player," Oregon quarterback Kellen Clemens said after Whitehead's performance against Fresno State. "He got some of those hand-offs when there was a big hole there; he took it quite a few ways ... Terrence showed his stuff today."

The early frustration Whitehead felt this season was the result of a lack of confidence in and knowledge of the new offense. That switched after offensive coordinator Gary Crowton re-worked the scheme.

"We need Terrence untracked for us to be the kind of offense we need to be," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "Terrence is a stud. It showed that his performance against Fresno State was a difference in the game."

After a game-breaking performance last week, Whitehead is looking to jump start his final college season, and there is no better opponent than the two-time defending national champion Trojans, who just happened to overlook one of Oregon's all-time great running backs.

Whitehead has not only been influential on the field, but in the locker room as well. The legacy Whitehead leaves on the record books establishes him as one of the best, but his greater accomplishment might be the

mentoring he has provided for the young backfield filling up the depth chart behind him.

Teaching the future

Perhaps the best recruit to wear green and yellow is freshman Jonathan Stewart, who is content learning from Whitehead and waiting a year for the starting gig.

"He's been a mentor, a brother," Stewart said of Whitehead. "He's taken it step-by-step through anything that we've needed."

Stewart said he learned about many things from Whitehead, from the plays on offense to the ladies on campus.

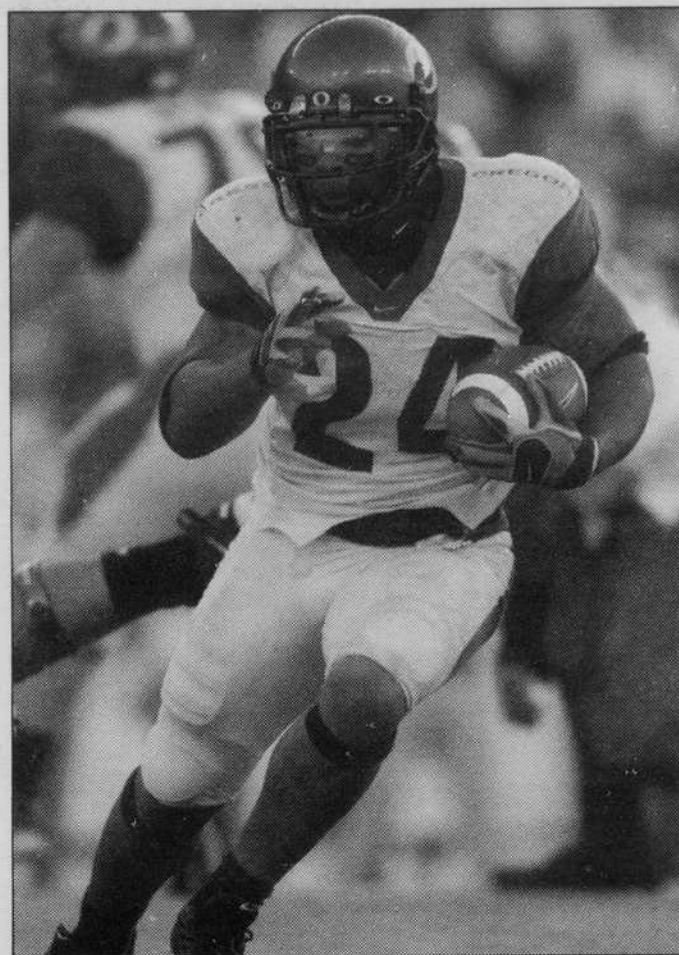
"Just the ropes of the offense, how to learn the offense and the different running techniques," Stewart said. "Staying focused in the game, things outside of college — school, girls — all kinds of things."

When the blue chip recruit was signed last spring, the pressure was imminent for Whitehead during spring practice and fall camp. But he didn't feel it.

"I wasn't really feeling like (Stewart) was on my heels," Whitehead said. "I'm not worried about that. I'm just going to come here and play my game."

Before this season started, Bellotti said Whitehead is, "the rock on which we build on, MVP of the team last year and our starter."

The two backs couldn't have been happier with the setup. Whitehead leaves his legacy, while Stewart learns for a year before he begins etching his own name into the Oregon history books.



KATE HORTON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon running back Terrence Whitehead currently ranks fourth on the career rushing list with 2,316 yards. The Los Angeles native scored the game-winning 42-yard touchdown last week to catapult the Ducks to a 3-0 record.

"The most important part is to get a good college education and of course try to win a national championship," Stewart said.

Stewart believes Oregon is close to accomplishing that goal and the leadership provided by Whitehead has been key.

Climbing the charts

If Whitehead, who currently sits fourth on the career rushing chart with 2,316 yards, averages 122.5 rushing yards per game in Oregon's final eight games of the regular season, he will

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