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IN BRIEF

Alex Smith named 49ers' new starting quarterback

Overall No. 1 draft pick Alex Smith was promoted to be the San Francisco 49ers' starting quarterback on Tuesday, ascending to the job after just four

games as Tim Rattay's backup.

Smith will make his first NFL start on Sunday against Peyton Manning and the Indianapolis Colts at Candlestick Park. The former Utah star played in two of the 49ers' first four games, losses to Philadelphia and Arizona.

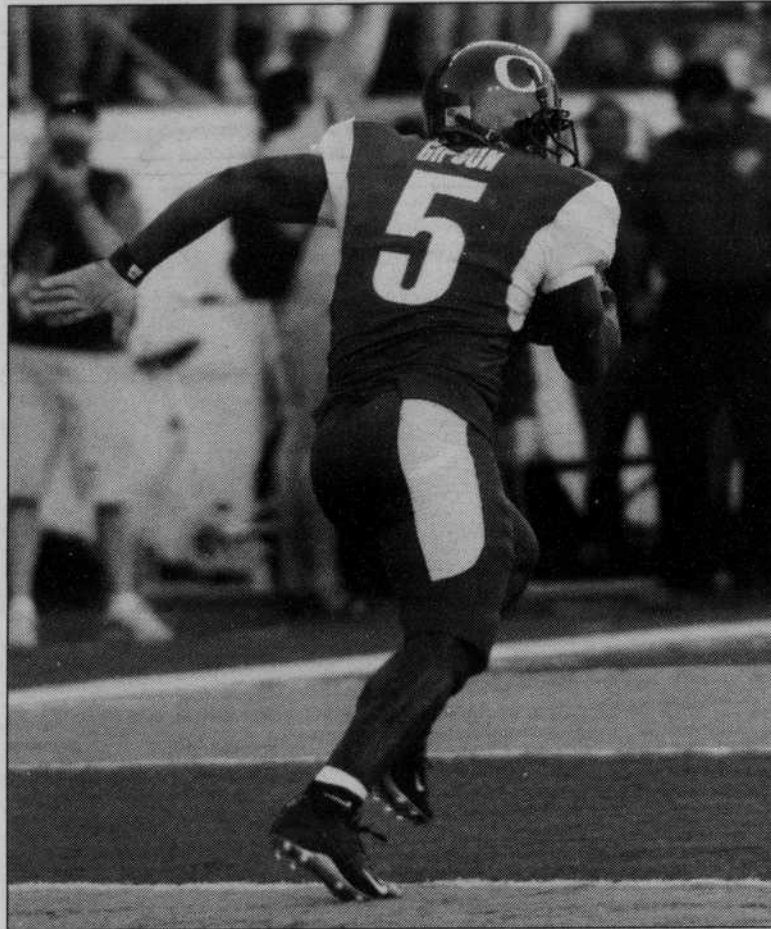
Rattay completed 57.7 percent of his passes this season for 677 yards, five touchdowns and six interceptions. He

compiled impressive statistics in a season-opening win over St. Louis and a last-minute loss to Dallas.

Smith was the 49ers' starter in their first two exhibition games, but he struggled to move the offense. His throws frequently were hurried and inaccurate, and he still was learning the intricacies of the West Coast offense.

—The Associated Press

Football: Penalties concern coach Bellotti



MARCUS LARSON | FOR THE EMERALD

Oregon defensive back Aaron Gipson returns an interception, his fourth in as many games, against USC on Sept. 24.

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The Ducks outscored Stanford 14-3 in last weekend's 44-20 route.

The Ducks have scored more than their opponent in each quarter except the last, where teams have outscored the Ducks 37-32.

Likewise, Arizona State has outscored its opponents big in the second quarter, holding a commanding 76-22 advantage, and the Sun Devils have outscored opponents in the first half by a whopping 111-29.

Injury Update

Cornerback Aaron Gipson received a concussion against Stanford and was examined yesterday by doctors. The senior leads the Ducks with four interceptions on the season and is only one shy of breaking into Oregon's top 10 list for career interceptions.

According to Bellotti, Gipson is expected to be available for Saturday's game.

Both Terrence Whitehead (with a groin injury) and Jonathan Stewart (with an ankle injury) are making steady improvements and should be in the lineup against Arizona State as well, according to running backs coach Gary Campbell. Whitehead was held out of last weekend's game against Stanford and Stewart carried only five times but scored three total touchdowns.

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Adams: NHL returns, fans will eventually come

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predominant amount of fans who argue against its logic, favoring to see the winner be decided by skill in the field rather than the penalty box. Is the shoot-out going to make every fan happy? Probably not, but only time will tell if it the shoot-out format, or hockey in general, is going to be popular enough to stay.

Another concern I have involves the new limits imposed on the goalkeeper's equipment. The dimensions of this equipment will be reduced by more than 10 percent. Also instated is a required one-inch reduction (to 11 inches) in the width of leg pads. The blocking glove, upper-body protector, pants and jersey are also going to be reduced. This ultimately gives the shooter more net to work with, which should result in higher scoring games. Goalies can no longer play the puck directly behind the net, unless they do so

outside of the inverted, trapezoid-shaped goalie box, which was added in the off-season.

Let's review where some of hockey's biggest stars are returning to action. Player moves have given optimism to many teams vying for a spot in the playoffs. They no longer need to play for peanuts in Europe, but might not be playing on the same teams they hailed from in the 2003-2004 season.

Wayne Gretzky is back, but not at the blue line. He is coaching the revamped Coyotes in Phoenix. Paul Kariya is still not a Duck— he's in Nashville— but Scott Niedermayer sure is. The Blue Jackets picked up Adam Foote. Bobby Holik and Peter Bondra have joined the Thrashers and Sergei Gonchar and Ziggy Palffy are Penguins. To make a long-winded story short, the Stanley Cup is up for grabs.

The biggest thing the NHL needs in order to earn at least a second-string gig in America's world of sports is patience. Patience from players, fans and the same coaches who have been blamed for coaching the game into extinction. It is essential for hockey's survival, seeing as it is currently on life-support. Coaches need to realize that the sport is on the brink and needs high-octane offense to become more audience-friendly.

Once fans can figure out their team's rosters and see the sport for both what it once was and what it is trying to be, they should start coming back to the rinks like a teenager who comes across a cherished childhood trinket boxed away in the attic. People will come. Maybe not today, and maybe not tomorrow, but — someday — people will come ... back.

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