

Despite OSU upset, Smith still shines

Mistakes can be the difference between victory and defeat.

For The Oregon Ducks on Saturday, they helped lead to the latter of the two.

But on a day when Oregon was injury ravaged and mistake-prone, quarterback Akili Smith showed why he is considered by many to be the best quarterback in the nation and a lock as an early to mid-first round draft pick in this year's NFL draft.



JAMES KHOSRAVI

Before I go any further, though, let me first offer my congratulations to Oregon State, especially to their redshirt freshman runningback Ken Simonton and freshman quarterback Jonathan Smith.

Simonton had a tremendous day running

the ball in a game the Oregon defense would just as soon forget.

He rushed for 157 yards on 28 attempts while scoring four touchdowns, including two in overtime, as he ran untouched by the Oregon defense for most of the game.

Jonathan Smith had one of his better outings as well. He threw for 303 yards and two touchdowns while completing 17 of 28 passes, including a long bomb of 75 yards for a touchdown to Greg Ainsworth.

The defense, however, is another story.

Both teams showed a tremendous lack of defense, as this edition of the Civil War featured a combined 950 yards of total offense (45% of which was compiled by Akili Smith of Oregon). Oregon's defense made mistakes all day, with the crown point being a botched interception.

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PAUL KITAGAKI JR. / The Oregonian

Akili Smith did as much as he could in the Ducks' 44-41 double-overtime loss to the Beavers in Saturday's Civil War. Smith, predicted to be picked around #15 in this year's NFL draft, needs a strong bowl performance to be picked in the Top10.

Cougars: Squad betters Spokane in drive for title

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rival Storm from Chemeketa.

The defending NWAACC Champions from Salem were coming off an incredible victory for its first win over Pierce College in 1998.

Down two games in its match with Pierce, Chemeketa went on a tear winning three straight for the match victory.

As Clackamas and Chemeketa took the floor on Friday night, a look of confidence shown on the faces of both teams.

Chemeketa prevailed.

The Cougars never found a rhythm as it was beaten handily 4-15, 3-15, 13-15.

Clackamas had a dismal 18.6 percent hitting efficiency, while the Storm seemed flawless.

"After the loss to Chemeketa," noted Woods, "it left us with a tough road back to the final. It's double-elimination so we knew that we could make it back."

The loss sent the Cougars into the loser's bracket which was set up as best two out of three—a format the Cougars hadn't had much success with earlier in the year.

Clackamas' first opponent on Saturday came in the form of Green River Community College.

The Gators eliminated Mt. Hood the night before to send the Saints home early with their second loss



Freshmen setters Kimber York [above left] and Nikki Tilton played an intricate role in Clackamas' drive towards a Southern Region title, as well as an NWAACC title. Both players plan to return to the Cougars' lineup next fall. Photos by John Thorburn.

of the tournament.

The Cougars rolled over the Western Region team in a 15-3, 15-6 win.

Freshman Anita Johnson left the Cougars with eight kills and seven digs.

Clackamas then faced the stingy Big Bend Vikings.

The upstart Vikings played the Cougars tough in Clackamas' 15-12, 12-15, 15-10 victory.

The win guaranteed the Cougars of at least equaling their third place performance in last year's tournament. The Big Bend loss eliminated the Vikings giving them the fourth place trophy.

Heading into the tournament, Clackamas was ranked #2 behind the Community Colleges of Spokane. The Cougars faced the Sasquatch in their next match.

Coming off a loss to Chemeketa, Spokane looked anxious to get back on track against Clackamas.

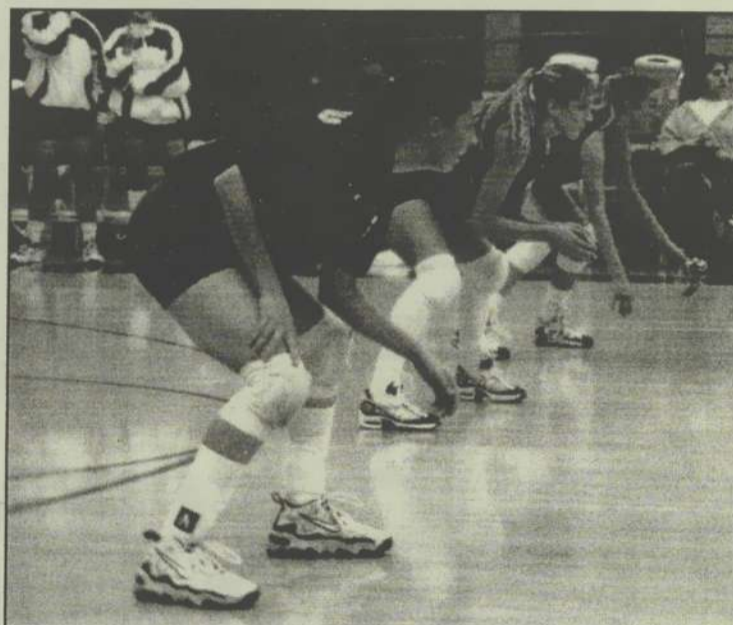
The Cougars, who won the first two meetings between the two teams earlier in the year, had dropped three straight to the Eastern Region champion Sasquatch.

Clackamas played next to perfect.

With a 98 percent serving percentage and a balanced offensive attack, the Cougars coasted to a 15-3 win in game one. The loss awoke a usually explosive Spokane squad.

Clackamas, however, never took its sights off its goal of making it to the championship match and won 15-13.

"There is a huge rivalry between Clackamas and Spokane," said Coach Woods. "It really started in 1996 when we played them for the championship and beat them there. They have an incredible program that is very similar to ours."



JOHN THORBURN / Clackamas Print

Clackamas players were ecstatic with their win over Spokane.

"Spokane has an awesome team," said Sophomore Michelle McKinney. "With our team, you can take a few players away and we're not as strong. With Spokane, you can take a few players away and they're still just as strong. They're going to be really good next year."

"After we beat Spokane, all of us felt that we could win the championship and we really felt that we were going to win it."

Coach Woods feels that that is a true sign of success.

"We knew that we could have won that match," said Woods. "The team really felt that they were going to win that match heading into it. You could see it on [the players] faces."

"If things had been a little different, if we were on the same plain with Chemeketa heading into the championship then things would have ended differently. We played twice as many matches as they did on Saturday and it's difficult to play a team that is fresh and has as much talent as Chemeketa does when you've been playing all day."

After dropping its first game in the championship and falling behind 9-14 in the second, Clackamas looked like it had nothing left

to give in the match. Then, a remarkable thing took place.

Spokane returned to the gymnasium to cheer on the Cougars along the team's bench in what seemed to be a huge boost for Clackamas.

The Cougars picked up their play and fought back to a 15-14 lead.

Poor officiating nullified what would have been a game-point for Clackamas and Chemeketa went on to win 17-15.

With a 2-0 game lead, the Storm never faltered in the third game as it won its second NWAACC title in as many years with the 15-3 victory.

"Spokane really picked us up in that second game," said Sophomore Maren Maggio.

Her teammates agreed that Spokane's presence was the biggest factor in the Cougars' turnaround.

"We all had goosebumps," said McKinney.

Coach Woods felt that the backing of Spokane showed what the Clackamas program is all about.

"When you win you gain respect," noted Woods. "It was no secret that Clackamas was the 'most-liked' team in the tournament. With the exception of the Chemeketa fans, everybody in that gym wanted us to win. That's a real sign of success when you get a team like Spokane, with the rivalry that we have with them,

backing you up."

Sophomores Amy Kraljev and Michelle McKinney were named to the All-Tournament first team while freshman Kimber York was named to the second team.

In all, Clackamas won its fourth consecutive Southern Region title, finished as the #2 team in the Northwest and kept its home league winning streak intact.

The Cougars' last league loss at home was October 11, 1995.

"It really is harder to win the Southern Region title than it is to win the NWAACC Championship," said Assistant Coach Jake Harwood. "You have to be good all year to win the region title. To win the NWAACC title, you just have to be good on a weekend."

With Chemeketa's victory, it marked the third-straight season the NWAACC championship has been won by a Southern Region team. Clackamas won the title in 1996 while Chemeketa captured the crown last year—perhaps self-evident of the strength of Oregon schools.

"This was really a great group of girls," noted Woods. "I couldn't ask for anything better. If I had the choice between finishing second with these girls or winning the title with the Chemeketa team, I would choose these girls every time. I am so proud of them."