

Final Season: Kevin Mitchell

by Cory Howard

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Mr. Consistency

On my way into town each day I can't help but to notice the large Oregon football billboard in the corner of my eye. The billboard features Oregon's senior linebacker Kevin Mitchell amongst a bunch of throw back football players. In big letters the billboard reads "Old School". The term "Old School" fits Mitchell perfectly. He plays the game the way the game should be played. He keeps his mouth shut and lets his actions on the field speak for themselves. Those who are close to Mitchell know that he is a leader by example and that's why they respect him as much as they do. *His position coach Don Pellum had this to say about Mitch:* "Heart — a 5' 11", 215-pound heart that just keeps beating, a big frickin' heart muscle, just going boom, boom, that's what he is. He's the most instinctive player that I've ever coached. Instincts means being able to see things develop, the ability to look at a formation and see all the little keys like a heavy hand, a light hand, the eyes of the running back and to meet the play at the line of scrimmage. He's able to see heavy or light, the fullback's eyes over there and anticipate the play and be right about 95% of the time. That's pretty impressive! He's the best I've ever coached at doing that. He is also one of the best I've had who studies and just loves football. All guys like football and love it to some degree, some more than others, but he ranks up there with probably the best guy I ever coached, Paul Jensen, at studying and knowing what was going on, he was just frickin' nails. Sirmon was that way too. "Old School" is appropriate when talking about him. He's a tremendous competitor. Just a wonderful, wonderful person, very sincere. Everything is important to him and he's not a rah-rah guy. He's one of the few that I've had who doesn't really care about being the leader. He doesn't want the spotlight on him; he just wants to do his job. In this day and age it's unusual. Most kids want the spotlight; they want to be the guy. He'll come in and watch film when no one else is around and be embarrassed to say it because he doesn't want the other guys to feel bad because they didn't. That's very unusual. He doesn't want the attention or care about being the captain. He just wants to play football and get out there and have fun. It's like the little kids in Pop Warner who just want to go out and play, that's him. So, I'm going to miss him. Kind of like Jensen and Sirmon he's going to leave the other guys with some things. How he handles himself, how he prepared himself, his approach to the game. He prepares for every game like it's the national championship. He will leave as a great example for the younger guys. It used to be, that's how Sirmon did it. Now it'll be, 'that's how Mitch did it.'"

Background

Like many of the Oregon football players Kevin is a product of the southern California area. He was born and raised in Orange, California which is basically an extension of the L.A. area. Kevin said that he knew he wanted to be a football player at the age of nine. Growing up he also played soccer, basketball and baseball.



"Mitch" has set an example during his four years, which many young players should follow.

By the time he reached high school Kevin had narrowed it down to football and baseball. Mitchell chose to attend football super powerhouse Mater Dei for his high school years. "My older brother went to the local high school, but I didn't really want to go there, I kind of did but I kind of didn't. I wanted to see if I could play at Mater Dei. I took a chance and it worked out perfectly." Kevin said their academics were pretty tough, but it really prepared him for when he got to college. While at Mater Dei Kevin shined on the football field as a stud fullback and linebacker. He accumulated 211 tackles, 18 quarterback sacks and 6 interceptions, 2 of which he took to the house. His talents did not go unnoticed on a team that was full of talent and finished the year ranked second in the United States. I asked him if he could pick out one game that was really memorable for him and he said "I played in front of 20,000 plus people in 6 games in the L.A. Coliseum and Anaheim Coliseum, we played De La Salle and Long Beach Poly, I only lost 2 games in high school." Kevin was named to the all-CIF

Division I football team three times. In addition, he earned first-team all-Orange county acclaims and 2nd team all-state awards. Mitchell was good enough to be recruited by basically everyone despite being somewhat undersized for an inside linebacker. Ultimately, he chose Oregon over Arizona State because he felt more at home in Eugene. "I just felt really comfortable at Oregon, I liked the guys and I knew some of them from back home so that was nice." In the summer of 1999 Kevin packed his bags and headed for Eugene to become the newest member of the University of Oregon football team. I asked Kevin if he expected to play his freshman year and he said "NO". "The best advice that I got was to come in, keep your mouth closed and your eyes and ears open and you'll learn a lot and I did. I learned a lot from Peter Sirmon my redshirt year. I think that redshirting allowed me to learn from him. If I had a question he could always answer it." Mitchell believes that using his redshirt year was very beneficial. "I was difficult to sit out, but it allowed me to get used to the college

football environment and figure out the mentality that was needed to play at this level so that when I did play the next year I was prepared for it."

Over the last 4 years no one has contributed more to the Oregon football team than Kevin Mitchell. His numbers speak for themselves. Mitch has started 35 games over the course of his career and he has recorded 341 total tackles which recently moved him into 6th all-time on the Oregon career tackling lists. He only needs 13 more stops this season to pass Chris Cosgrove for number five all-time. If the Ducks make it to a bowl game Mitchell could have a shot at knocking off number four all-time, Darrel Mehl, who had 373 career stops. Whether he ends up at number five or four doesn't really matter that much. Either way Mitchell's career numbers make him one of the best Oregon defenders of all-time. The Oregon football program has been lucky to have a guy like Kevin Mitchell over the last four years. He is a shining example of what it means to be a successful student athlete. The following is his response to some of the questions that I had for him.

DI: Describe how you felt when you first ran out of the tunnel at Autzen?

KM: I was scared, I was very nervous my first game.

DI: Describe your first tackle as a Duck?

KM: We were in our goal line defense; it was a short yardage situation. They ran

MORE ABOUT KEVIN

Favorite Pro Athlete:

Any linebacker

Favorite Food:

Fetticine Alfredo

Favorite Movie: **The Outsiders**

Favorite TV Show:

Too many to list

Favorite Music: **Metalica**

Dream Play: **4th & goal at the one... I jump over the pile & meet the running back head on to win the game.**

Players I miss the most from last year: **Dave Moretti & Garret Graham**

Career after Football:

Teacher or Law Enforcement

Most Influential Person: **Father**

If I was stranded on an island, I'd like to be with... : **My wife**

Teams I Enjoy Beating the Most: **OSU & Washington**

Funniest Guys on the Team: **Dave Martin & Brent Haberly**

Team Not on the Schedule I'd Like to Play: **Virginia Tech, Nebraska or any Florida team.**

On my wall I have a poster of: **Nothing, I'm married.**

Hobbies: **Wakeboarding**