

WASHINGTON — On paper the Huskies seem quite formidable. Don James, the 1977 National Coach of the Year, has done an excellent job beating the California schools to the Coast's best high schoolers, but Washington still does not have a wealth of talent comparable to that at USC.

Quarterback Warren Moon and center Blair Bush will be hard to replace, and five of the top seven defensive linemen are gone as well.

There is considerable talent elsewhere, though. Five of the top six running backs and the entire offensive line, with the exception of Bush, return. Joe Steele, who rushed for 865 yards and caught 25 passes, and speedy Spider Gaines (30 receptions) provide offensive punch.

The strength of the defense lies in the linebacking crew, led by Third Team all-American Michael Jackson.

Washington will have to prove itself early when they entertain UCLA on Sept. 9. The Pac-10 championship may be decided Nov. 11, when the Huskies meet USC in Los Angeles.

UCLA — The Bruins feature an explosive backfield which includes powerful running back Teotis Brown, track hurdler James Owens, who last year rushed for 938 yards, and quarterback Rick Bashore, who passed for 1,015 yards in 1977.

Six defensive starters are gone but linebacker Jerry Robinson and tackle Manu Tuiasosope, both 1977 all-Americans, provide a strong nucleus.

STANFORD — Gone are quarterback Guy Bunkamin, wide receiver James Lofton and tackle Gordon King, all high professional draft choices, but returning is Bill Walsh, 1977's Pac-8 Coach of the Year. Walsh begins his second season at the helm of the Cardinals and started the year with some great recruiting. The Cardinals may be just a couple years away from a return to the success they enjoyed when Jim Plunkett was quarterback.

Led by a strong defense, Stanford may challenge this year. Linebacker Gordy Ceresino, a legitimate all-American candidate, leads the unit.

ARIZONA ST. — If the Sun Devils hold up physically they could

challenge for one of the top three spots, but, regardless, Kush will field a speedy and exciting team.

Wide receiver Chris DeFrance is a 9.5 sprinter and holds the school triple jump record. Running backs Mike (Turtle) Harris and Arthur Lane both return, but incoming freshman Willie Gittens may be good enough to move one of them out of the starting backfield.

The defense is anchored by middle guard Al Harris (6-5, 235) an all-American candidate.

CALIFORNIA — Coach Mike White is gone despite a 7-4 record in 1977, and he was replaced by Roger Theder, who built a strong offense for the Bears as an assistant coach for the past six years.

Ironically, Cal's strength will be on defense where end Ralph DeLoach (6-5, 255), an all-American last year, returns.

WASHINGTON ST. — The Cougars probably won't win the title this year, but they will be one of the best draws in the league because of quarterback Jack Thompson. "The Throwin' Samoan," has passed for 5,485 yards in three seasons, including 2,372 yards and 13 touchdowns last year.

The Samoan will do plenty more throwin' this year, and may even return the Heisman Trophy to the Pacific Coast.

ARIZONA — Mason brought the best of his Cincinnati team to Arizona with him, but the Wildcats still won't have troops enough to do battle with the rest of the league week in and week out. Mason does have one of the nation's best crop of recruits, though.

OREGON — The Ducks are rebuilding — again.

OREGON ST. — The Beavers played well in spots last year and may be on the way up, but not this year.

The offense will be improved and the strong point of the team. Returning are running back James Fields, the Beavers' top rusher the past two seasons; quarterback John Norman, who passed for over 900 yards last year, and tailback Willie Johnson, who came on strong at the end of last season.

On defense, linebackers Kent Peyton and Kent Howe return, but lack of depth is a problem.

Ducks

(Continued from Page 10D)

If the offensive line lives up to expectations, the Ducks should have a much improved running game. The starting fullback spot involves a dogfight between sophomore Vince Williams (6-0, 218) and juniors Jeff Wood (6-2, 229) and Rich Clough (6-2, 206). Williams and Wood split time last year, and Clough, listed third-team on last spring's depth chart, moved into the picture with an outstanding spring practice.

Like quarterback, the tailback position is unsettled and vital to the Ducks' offensive scheme of things. Senior Ed Radcliff and sophomore Don Davis were part-time starters last season, but the player being counted upon most is freshman Reggie Young, a high school all-American from Sacramento.

If none of the above three prove capable, any of three other fine incoming prep runners — Dwight Robertson, Tim Tyler or Charlie Bisharat — could start.

The wide receiver position is potentially explosive with the return of senior Ken Page, who had 40

receptions for 591 yards in 1977, and the addition of track sprinters Don Coleman and Andrew Banks and incoming freshman Rourke Lowe, an all-American at Aloha High School. Coleman, Banks and Lowe are unknown quantities, however, and must beat out returning senior Paul Bachold, who caught five passes for 47 yards last year.

The kicking game will be overhauled because of the graduation of kicker/punter Roy Geiger, last year's leading scorer with 52 points. His replacements will probably be newcomers Pat English, freshman kicker, and Mike Babb, a sophomore transfer from OSU.

If Oregon is not decimated by injuries in the opening games against Colorado and USC, Brooks' charges could surprise people by winning as many as four games. If past history holds true, though, the Ducks may fulfill the prophecy of most pre-season publications by finishing in the basement of the Pac-10.

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