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# It's a Pac-10 nemesis

By Steve Turcotte  
Of the Emerald

The Pacific Coast Athletic Association. The name itself may not strike terror in the hearts of many opposing football teams, but for some, like Oregon's Ducks, the PCAA has provided ample competition.

The Pac-10, usually one of the premier football conferences in the country, has not fared well against the PCAA in recent years. In fact, last season, the Pac-10 won the season series 5-4, and this season, the more prestigious league holds just a 4-3 edge.

Oregon in particular has taken its lumps from the PCAA. The Ducks have already lost to one PCAA team this season, Pacific, in the season opener for both teams.

Last season, the Ducks faced two PCAA teams — Fresno State and San Jose State — and lost to both. A couple of freak losses? PCAA coaches don't think so.

"I really believe that this is a very good football conference," says Pacific coach Bob Cope, whose Tigers upended the Ducks 21-15 Sept. 3. "I really don't think that the conference thing has anything to do with it because when two teams get together, the score is decided on the field, not by what conference they are from."

Oregon coach Rich Brooks doesn't even think twice about whether the PCAA is a good football league.

"They beat us twice last year, didn't they?" Brooks says.

"They are definitely a good football league," he adds. "They can play with anybody in the country. They have really improved offensively as well."

Other Pac-10 teams besides Oregon have been shown up by teams from the PCAA. This season, San Diego State beat California and San Jose State whipped Stanford.

The PCAA's resurgence isn't just a stroke of good luck. There are two things which both Pac-10 and PCAA coaches have pinpointed as the turning point for the league in recent years — quarterbacks and the 30 scholarship limit imposed on Division I schools by the NCAA.

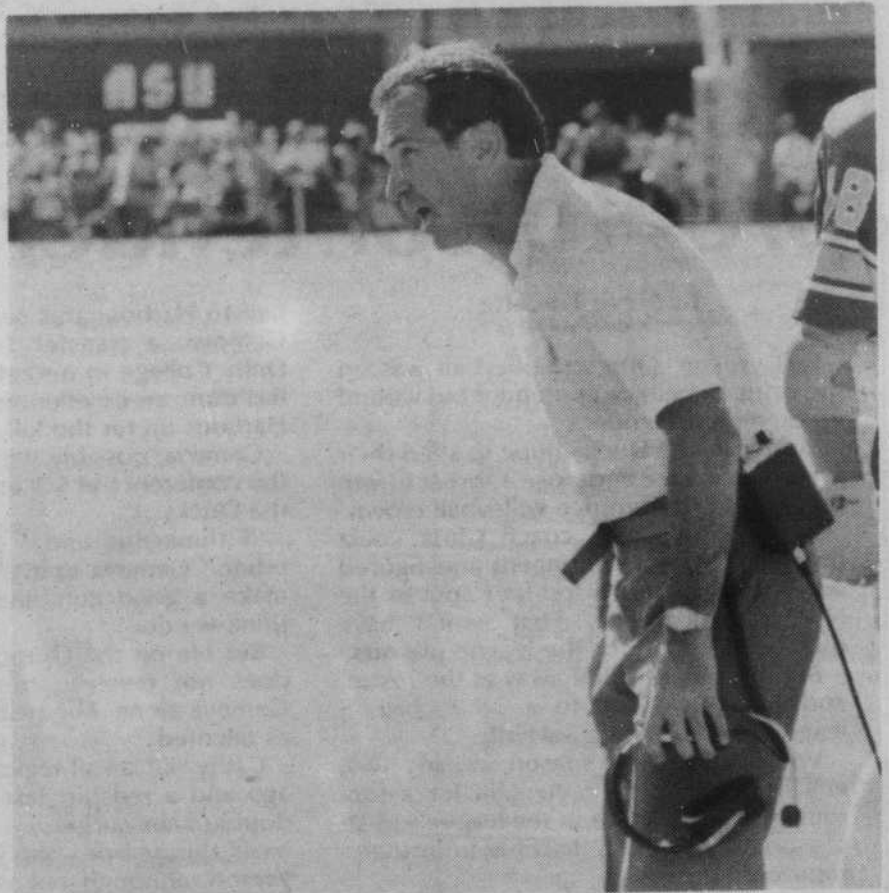
"As far as I'm concerned, the 30 scholarship rule has leveled football off," says Fresno State coach Jim Sweeney. "There's now very much parity between teams."

Cope, thinks the rule aids all teams.

"The PCAA, especially, has benefitted from the 30 rule to become more competitive," says the first-year Pacific coach. "It has really brought some parity to the game."

Quarterbacks, too, have also helped the PCAA become a widely-recognized conference. Last season, San Jose State had a gem in Steve Clarkson, since graduated. This season, PCAA quarterbacks appear to be solid again with freshman Kevin Sweeney at Fresno State and Paul Berner (before being injured) at Pacific.

"In our conference last season we had a lot of top-flight quarterbacks who were capable of mak-



*Emerald Photos*

Rich Brooks (above) has seen PCAA players like San Jose State's Tim Kears (below) riddle his Ducks too many times.

ing things happen," Cope says. "And when you have the ability to move the football like teams in the conference do, you can play with anybody."

"We have always been an offensive conference," San Jose State coach Jack Elway says. "This league stacks up with any other conference — there are a lot of good people in the skill positions."

Sweeney, the former Washington State head coach, agrees.

"There are good football teams in this conference. I'm not going to say that we can beat Washington, UCLA or USC regularly, but I will say that the teams can play with them."

The PCAA has always had its share of good athletes. Last season Henry Ellard, a wide

receiver at Fresno State, was drafted by the Los Angeles Rams and is playing regularly. Gil Byrd, a defensive back from San Jose State, earned a starting assignment with the San Diego Chargers.

"There's never been any question that the PCAA has talent," says Cope. "A lot of great football players have played in the conference."

The abundance of talent enables the PCAA to assemble top-flight schedules. For instance, this season Pacific played Oregon and West Virginia; San Jose State has California, Stanford and Arizona State on its agenda while Cal State-Fullerton went against Arizona last weekend.

"It's nice that finally this conference is receiving recognition and getting some top teams."

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