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Sports

Ducks to vie for Pac-10 conference lead in weekend Pasadena game with Bruins

By Craig Harris
Emerald Sports Reporter

The question that is floating around the Pacific-10 Conference and the rest of the nation is this: Are the Ducks for real?

That will be answered this Saturday when Oregon, 4-1, takes its 16th place Associated Press ranking to Pasadena to battle co-conference leader UCLA. What Sports Illustrated listed last week as a week of Duck hunting for the ninth-ranked Bruins now becomes a battle for sole position of the conference lead.

This is all pretty incredible, because the Ducks were picked to finish only a step above cellar-dweller California and one national magazine called them the eighth worst team in the nation.

Despite this, Oregon is now on a three-game win streak and ranked in five news polls — a first since 1970 to be in a wire service poll. Sports Illustrated even changed their minds after the Ducks upset Washington and USC, giving them a 16 ranking this week and saying "Duck, here comes upstart Oregon."

"After beating Washington and USC, we are finally getting some respect," defensive captain Anthony Newman said. "We're a good football team and people should think we are real from the past games we've played."

Newman won't have an argument from UCLA coach Terry Donahue. The Bruins, 4-1, are one of the few teams that are taking the Ducks seriously going into the game.

"They are a good solid football team and they are for real. They appear to be very steady," Donahue said.

"I would certainly trade conference wins with them if I could, they have the best record in the conference along with UCLA. We have to play the best we have all year to beat them," Donahue said.

He even added that Oregon's Bill Musgrave is the hottest quarterback in the conference.

Despite the build up from Donahue and the media attention, Oregon coach Rich Brooks



Courtesy photo

UCLA's Gaston Green, a Heisman Trophy candidate, may pose a problem for the Ducks this week end in Pasadena.

is keeping the game in perspective and not jumping on the bowl bandwagon — yet.

"You don't get to a bowl with four wins, but this game is very important because if we win we've beaten three of four teams that could have finished first. That would put us in a pretty good position, but if UCLA wins they are a step up on everybody," Brooks said.

For the Ducks to get in that position they need to control Heisman Trophy Candidate Gaston Green and the lethal arm of Troy Aikman, who is rated number one in the Pac-10 in passing efficiency with a .698 percentage.

"We have got to contain Green, we can't let him break a long run and we have to tackle well. If we do that then we can focus on Aikman and their passing game," Brooks said.

Newman reiterated Brooks

concern of stopping Green.

"I've never seen a guy in college that quick, we need to have 11 hats on him, and we have to play smash-mouth football on him," Newman said.

While the Ducks will need to find a way to slow down Green, they can't focus all their attention on him. The Bruins are the elite team in conference standings, rating number one in passing, rushing, and scoring defense. UCLA is only giving up 16 points a game while lighting up 36 points on offense. And yes, they are number one in that category too.

The Ducks on the other hand, are eighth in scoring offense and fifth in scoring defense.

Statistically, the Ducks are in trouble.

But, Oregon was in this situation before in 1984, after losing four in a row, and went on to humble the Bruins 20-18 in the Rose Bowl. In fact, the Ducks have won two of the last three over the Bruins and the last six trips to the Golden State the Ducks have come up winners.

"We have a lot of players from California and they want to play well in front of their family and friends," Brooks said.

They'll need to because the Ducks are 14 point underdogs — still needing to prove that they are for real.

Duck game to be televised

Last-minute negotiations have brought the Oregon-UCLA football game on Saturday to television after all, at least locally.

The Oregon Athletic Department, in conjunction with Eugene television station KEZI, Portland station KATU and Medford station KDRV will televise Saturday's Pacific-10 Conference clash between the Ducks and Bruins, the Athletic Department confirmed Thursday.

KATU sports director Steve Arena will call the play-by-play. Airtime will be 12:30 p.m., with kickoff immediately thereafter.

The University will receive \$60,000 in rights fees for the broadcast, according

to athletic director Bill Byrne. "We are delighted to have our fans see the game on television," Byrne said, adding he believed the fee to be fair compensation.

Prior to the USC game last week, ABC had announced it would televise the winner of that game to a regional audience. However, the network later discovered a written promise to show the USC-Washington game on Saturday.

The network granted Oregon affiliate stations the right to televise the Duck game in the state, paving the way for negotiations between Oregon, UCLA and the stations to transmit the broadcast here.

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