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FOOTBALL

Duck bowl chances: a wild ride

By Dave Charbonneau Emerald Sports Editor

The Independence Bowl, the Copper Bowl, the Freedom Bowl, the John Hancock Bowl and the Aloha Bowl.

All of these bowls mean nothing to Oregon coach Rich Brooks going into this weekend's game against UCLA.

"There's not much to talk about until we're 7-4," Brooks said. "Until then, any bowl talk is ridiculous."

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If the Ducks are able to win their next two games, they may find themselves in any one of the aforementioned games.

But they will need a little help from their friends.

As of right now, Oregon has no chance of finishing in one of the top two positions in the conference and are a long-shot to finish third, and all it can do is win the next two games and see what everyone else does.

With Washington at 5-1 in the Pacific-10 Conference, it is sitting in good shape to go to the Rose Bowl, and Arizona is the frontrunner for the second place position.

After that, Stanford, USC, Washington State and Oregom are left to battle it out for the third, fourth and fifth position.

Here's an attempt to simplify Oregon's bowl chances – if the Ducks win their next two games:

The Freedom Bowl has dibs on the third-place finisher in the Pac-10. Stanford, USC and Washington State are all tied for third at 4-2. In order for Oregon to have a chance to finish third, USC and Stanford will need to lose their last two games and Washington State will have to lose one.

The Copper Bowl is looking at getting a Pac-10 team in its game and is sending a scout to see the Oregon-UCLA game.

Al O'Brien, founder of the Copper Bowl and a member of its selection committee, said his bowl is hoping to get the fourthplace team from the conference.

"It looks as if we may have the fourth team in the Pac-10," he said. "If Oregon can finish fourth in the conference, they would have a very good shot."

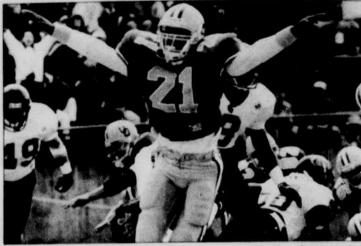


Photo by Jeff Pasia

Sean Burwell and the Ducks will accept a bowl bid with open arms.

For that to happen, either USC or Stanford would have to lose both of their games and Washington State would have to lose one.

The Independence Bowl seems to be the Ducks' most reasonable chance of postseason play. The bowl is very high on Oregon after the Ducks' 1989 appearance in which around 6,000 Duck fans made the trip to Shreveport.

Bob Brown, president of the Sports Foundation, which puts on the Independence Bowl, said his bowl hopes to match either Oregon, West Virginia or Clemson up against either Mississippi or Mississippi State.

He also said the Ducks' fan support could make the difference.

"You can always find a good football team," Brown said. "The challenge is finding a team with strong support. When Oregon came in '89, they were great and were really adopted by our community. Oregon is my personal favorite because of our experience with them three years ago."

The John Hancock Bowl has not yet crossed Oregon off its list. One of the bowl's teams comes out of the bowl coalition pool—which consists of teams from the Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big-8, Pac-10 and Southwest conferences. If that team comes out the Pac-10, Oregon will probably not have a shot.

But Tom Starr, director of sports for the bowl, said if the coalition team comes from one of the other conferences, the Ducks could get an invitation.

"I think Oregon would very much be in our picture," he said, "depending on what USC and Stanford did."

The Aloha Bowl is a longshot for the Ducks, but still a possibility.

The bowl is played on Christmas and usually attracts a large television audience, and it is probably the most prestigious of the five bowls.

They would have liked to get Hawaii to play in the bowl, but it looks as if Hawaii will go to the Holiday Bowl by finishing first in Western Athletic Conference.

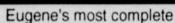
The Aloha Bowl has no ties to the coalition pool and is therefore left to pick from what's left.

Oregon's west coast location could be an advantage, but the Ducks would likely have to depend on a fourth-place finish to even be considered.

USC, Stanford and Washington State all have two Pac-10 games remaining. The Cougars have the toughest schedule with a game at Stanford this week and are at home the following week against Washington.

Stanford has the game against Washington State and closes the season on the road against California.

USC has Arizona at home this weekend, is at UCLA next weekend and closes the season at home against Notre Dame.



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