

Pac-10 lead on the line in Seattle

■ **DIVISION BATTLE:** Winner of Huskies-Trojans game will take the division lead

SEATTLE (AP) — Keyshawn Johnson's dream of winning a national championship has been shattered. Now, he's hoping for a Pacific-10 Conference title.

The No. 13 Southern California Trojans, featuring Johnson at wide receiver, can take a big step toward their new goal Saturday by beating the No. 17 Washington Huskies.

It's a matchup of the only teams that remain unbeaten (4-0) in Pac-10 play. The winner will be in the driver's seat to the Rose Bowl.

"Right now, the Rose Bowl is everything to me," Johnson said. "I've lost to Notre Dame and I have to live with that."

Considered by many as the top college football player in the nation, the 6-foot-4, 210-pound Johnson caught six passes for 122 yards and one touchdown in South Bend, Ind., last Saturday. It wasn't nearly enough.

Ranked fifth in the nation last week, Southern Cal lost to Notre Dame 38-10 on a wet, windy day when the Irish ran their record to 12-0-1 against the Trojans since 1982.

Johnson returned for his senior season at Southern Cal instead of entering the NFL draft, where he probably would have been a first-round pick, for the opportunity to beat Notre Dame.

"It's definitely a tough situation," Johnson said. "Any time you lose a game that was one of our goals, it hurts all of us."

Despite the Notre Dame defeat and despite the fact that the Trojans will be playing in front of a hostile crowd of 74,000, they've been made 4-point favorites.

Johnson said it won't be easy to win in Seattle.

"It's going to be one of those situations just like a Notre Dame," he said. "The environment, the weather, everything. All that's on the line. Just like it was on the line in South Bend."

As expected, Johnson is having a big statistical season. In Southern Cal's 6-1 start, he's aver-

aging 8.3 receptions a game to rank fourth in the nation and 121 in receiving yards to rank sixth nationally. Johnson tops the Pac-10 in both categories.

He's moved to third place on Southern Cal's all-time receiving list with 124 career catches for 2,209 yards and 14 touchdowns. And he's done it in a season and a half.

"He's the only guy I've ever seen who can run a hitch route and take it 60 yards for a touchdown," starting Trojans quarterback Brad Otton said. "He makes incredible things happen."

"He's the best receiver there is in college football right now, period," Washington coach Jim Lambright said. "He's just such a tremendous target. He's somebody who can beat you by himself."

Johnson was playing injured when Washington and Southern Cal played in the season opener in Los Angeles Sept. 3, 1994. The Trojans won 24-17, but Johnson was held to one catch for five yards.

George tops barren list of Heisman hopefuls

■ **HEISMAN:** In the wake of a star-studded season last year, the list of candidates is, as of yet, undetermined

Does anybody want to win the 1995 Heisman Trophy?

Entering the home stretch, the competition for college football's most coveted award is wide open. No player has captured the imagination of Heisman voters.

"I don't see any clear-cut favorite," Mark Blaudschun of the Boston Globe said.

"We're desperately searching for a front-runner, but nobody can find one," Ivan Maisel of Newsday said.

With a month left in the regular season, the top contenders appear to be tailback Eddie George of Ohio State and four quarterbacks — Danny Kanell of Florida State, Tommie Frazier of Nebraska, Danny Wuerffel of Florida and Peyton Manning of Tennessee.

Other candidates include Southern Cal receiver Keyshawn Johnson, Ohio State quarterback Bobby Hoying and running backs Troy Davis of Iowa State, Warrick Dunn of Florida State and Darrell Autry of Northwestern.

Early front-runner Leeland McElroy of Texas A&M has fallen fast after a spectacular start, and no one has risen to take his place.

The leader may not emerge until three national-impact games are played at the end of November. On Friday, Nov. 24, Frazier will lead second-ranked Nebraska against No. 23 Oklahoma. The following day, George and his No. 4 Buckeyes play at No. 9 Michigan, while Kanell and Wuerffel compete on the same field when top-ranked Florida State visits No. 3 Florida.

"Nobody should vote until Nov. 26," ESPN commentator Beano Cook said. "Those games in late November should determine the winner."

If he had to vote today, Cook would cast his ballot for George, who has rushed for 990 yards and 11 TDs against a tough schedule. The Buckeyes already have beaten No. 12 Notre Dame, No. 16 Penn State and No. 17 Washington.

"He's done the most in the big games," Cook said. Kanell has been racking up huge passing numbers even though he hasn't played much in the second half of Florida State's seven easy victories. He has thrown 25 TD passes and only six interceptions while completing 73 percent.

"His completion percentage has been outrageous," Jimmy Burch of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram said. "His numbers just scream off the page."

Because he's more of a running quarterback, Frazier doesn't have eye-popping stats. He has run for nine TDs and passed for 11, but the most important numbers on his resume are 27-1 — his regular-season record as a starter at Nebraska.

Wuerffel and Manning are completing about two-thirds of their passes and they're both closing in on the 2,000-yard mark. Neither, however, is the top-rated passer in the Southeastern Conference. They trail South Carolina's Steve Taneyhill, who in his last three games has thrown for a remarkable 1,090 yards and 12 touchdowns without an interception.

Wuerffel's biggest asset — playing in Steve Spurrier's "Fun 'N Gun" offense — may also be his biggest drawback in the Heisman voting. Spurrier's high-octane offense allows a passer to compile big stats, but the credit usually goes to the coach.

Saturday game key to UCLA's season

■ **BIG GAME:** UCLA players see Saturday as a must-win situation

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — In the mind of at least one UCLA player, Saturday's game against California is the most important of the season.

Even more important than the Southern Cal game?

Yes, even more important than that.

"It's the hugest game of the season for us, whether anyone else thinks so or not," Bruins line-backer Abdul McCullough said. "I've got friends on the (Cal) team and they've been talking. And they say we are a joke, they've never lost to us."

It was just the opposite a few years ago. In fact, the Bruins dominated the Golden Bears like few

teams have dominated opponents they've played on a regular basis.

Starting in 1972, UCLA beat Cal 18 straight times. Finally, in 1990, the Bears broke the streak with a 38-31 victory at Berkeley.

And that began a new streak, one that has reached five — Cal won the 1991 game 27-24, the 1992 meeting 48-12, the 1993 contest 27-25 and last year's game 26-7.

The Bears will try for six in a row Saturday at the Rose Bowl. No UCLA opponent has ever beaten the Bruins six straight times.

"We have all the incentive in the world to win this game," said starting UCLA quarterback Cade McNown, who hasn't been lost to Cal because he's only a freshman. But he's aware of the history.

"Five years in a row, that's

tough," McNown said. "It is, it has to be (UCLA's biggest game). If we don't get this game, we're hurting."

"On top of that, none of the guys on this team has beaten Cal. It's time to throw that out the window. Every guy on the team is fed up with losing to Cal."

The 24th-ranked Bruins (5-2, 2-2 Pac-10) have won their last three games to move back into the rankings as well as stimulate hopes for a prominent bowl game.

It's doubtful they could win the league championship and play in the Rose Bowl, but teams with two losses have occasionally accomplished such a feat.

"It could be done," McCullough said. "It's a tough conference, nobody's going to go undefeated."

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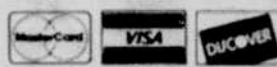
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