

sideline

TODAY IN SPORTS

Webber expected to return on Thursday

LANDOVER, Md. (AP) — Washington Bullets forward Chris Webber, recovering from a dislocated shoulder, is expected to play in Thursday night's home game against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Webber had been placed on the injured list before the start of the season. He hurt the shoulder during an exhibition game against Indiana on Oct. 21. The Bullets are 5-6 without him.

"Anytime you are able to get a player of Chris Webber's caliber back into your lineup, you can't help but be excited," coach Jim Lynam said.

Webber would have been available for Tuesday night's game at New Jersey, but he will serve a one-game suspension for a preseason fight with Chicago's Luc Longley.

The Bullets waived center Mike Peplowski on Monday to make room on the roster for Webber.

Rutgers fires coach after 4-7 season

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (AP) — Doug Graber, who failed in six seasons to turn around the Rutgers football program, was fired Monday as coach of the Scarlet Knights.

University president Francis Lawrence announced that Graber had been relieved of his duties effective immediately. Athletic director Fred Gruninger said a search had begun for a new coach.

"Doug Graber has been an untiring worker for our football program," Lawrence said. "We are indebted to him for his efforts and wish him the greatest success in the future."

Rutgers finished the season Friday with a 41-38 loss to Boston College. The team, expected to be Graber's best, was 4-7 and 2-5 in the Big East Conference.

In six years, Graber had only two winning seasons, his best being 7-4 in 1992. Overall, his record was 29-36-1.

Graber did not attend the news conference, but in a telephone conference call from his office said he did not feel he'd been mistreated.

"There's no bitterness involved," he said. "I am a big boy and I understand clearly what the bottom line is. I wish Rutgers nothing but the best."

Holiday weekend filled with exciting games

I'm willing to admit it. I blew it. My football picks for last weekend's games were pitiful. I didn't post the big bagel, but going 3-5 was bad enough. I hadn't had a losing weekend in six weeks, but now that is but a memory.

You know something? Even though my picks were horrible, it really doesn't matter — I still lead the staff overall and I actually had fun losing.

A person couldn't have asked for a better holiday weekend of close, down-to-the-wire, college football games. Texas and Baylor gave us an inkling on Thursday night of what the next three days would hold, as the Longhorns grasped a 21-13 lead in the fourth quarter, staving off any Baylor threats until the final blow of the cannon at the victors' stadium.

And how about the Georgia-Georgia Tech contest. Tech was favored to oust the Bulldogs and their fallen head coach — it was announced prior to the game that he wouldn't be returning next year — by two points, but the Bulldogs won one for the gipper anyhow. On the final play of the

game, one of the ugliest field goal attempts this year sailed through the uprights for an 18-17 upset.

On Friday morning, when everybody felt like a bomb had

just gone off in their stomachs after gorging themselves on turkey day, football fans had to suffer through four hours of the Cornhuskers

sticking it to the Sooners 37-0. However, there was some excitement to the telecast. During the fourth quarter, ABC took a break from the slaughter on the field to tell the nation that a port-a-pottie was on fire in the parking lot and the ladder truck was on the way. Oh, the excitement.

But things did return to normal later that day as Arizona State and Arizona battled to the end, as a Wildcats' field goal won the game with less than a minute remaining. Arizona's 31-28 victory kept the Sun Devils from a bowl berth.

With Thursday and Friday's

games setting the stage — excluding the outhouse fiasco — you had to have a feeling something insane was going to happen. It did.

Of course, I'm referring to Michigan's 31-23 upheaval of then-No. 2-ranked Ohio State. Not only did the loss deny the Buckeyes a chance of beating out the toilet burners from Nebraska for the national title, but it also meant that the miracle team of Northwestern was going to the Rose Bowl for the first time since 1949.

However, the most important thing that has come from Ohio State's loss is the bowl alliance saving face.

The alliance was instituted this season for the sole purpose of deriving a true national champion from the 108 Division I teams, so there wouldn't be any type of conflict about which team deserved the title, unlike last year's Nebraska-Penn State controversy. Prior to Michigan's triumph over Ohio State, however, everything was set for there to be another never-ending argument.

The then-third-ranked Flori-

da Gators were in line to play the defending champion Cornhuskers at the Fiesta Bowl — a game designated as the "Championship Game." Meanwhile the Buckeyes would have been playing a subpar USC team at the Rose Bowl, leaving them no chance for the national title — like last year's Penn State team.

But now, by the virtue of some shining light, the alliance has come out smelling like roses, if you don't mind the phrase. They've gotten the championship matchup everyone wanted — as long as the Gators don't blow it against Arkansas in the Southeastern Conference Championship game this weekend.

Even though the title game is set, what is going to happen next year, or the year after, when the Nebraska-Penn State scenario comes up again? Because you know it's going to happen.

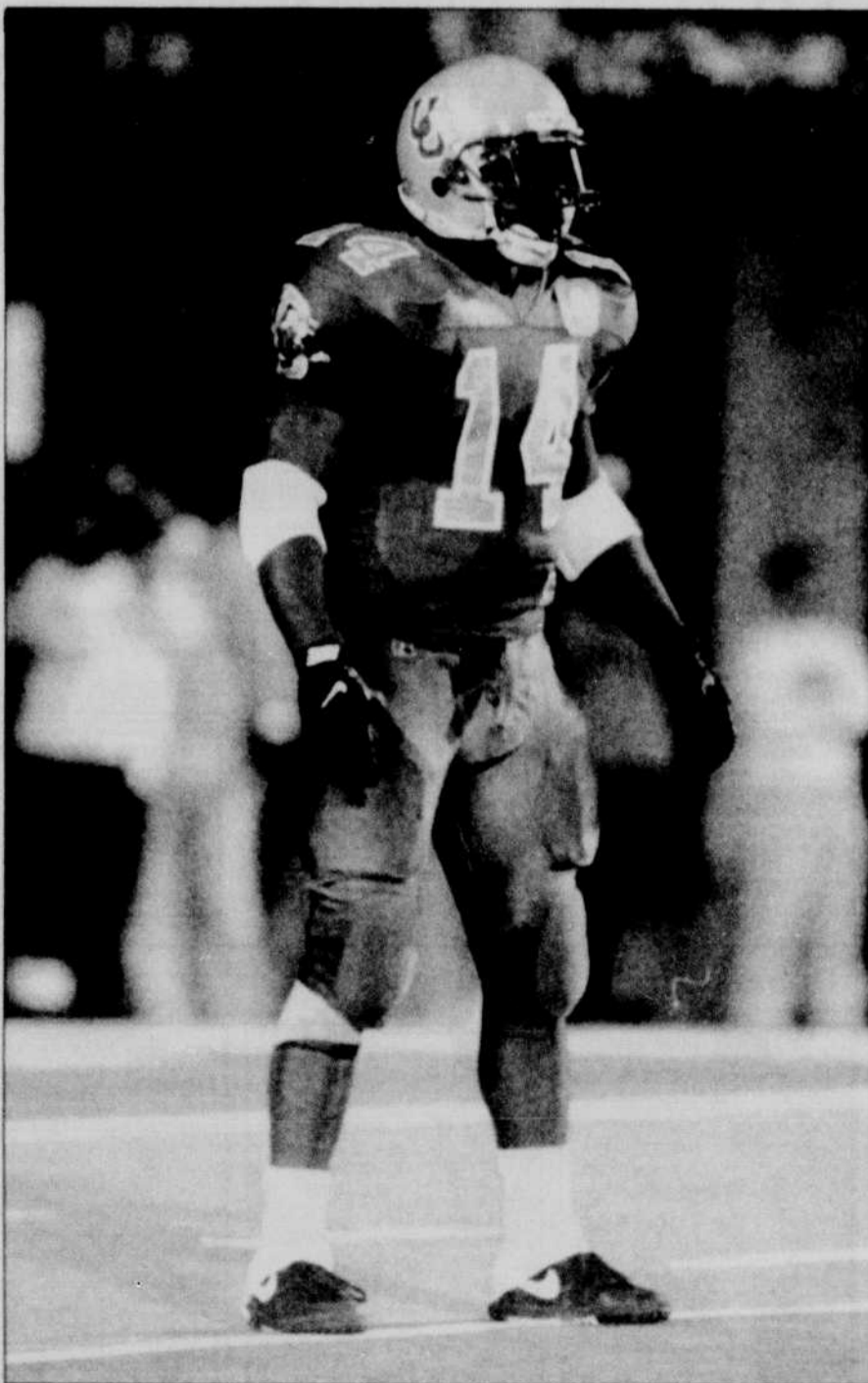
Will teams break their contractual bowl agreements to play in a championship game, or will it be the same as 1995?

I know this argument has

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Mark McTyre



Senior tailback Ricky Whittle was the lone Oregon player on the All Pacific-10 Conference first team offense selected by the conference head coaches.

Whittle, Asher and Molden named to All Pac-10 team

■ **FOOTBALL:** The Ducks were honored with three first team and four second team selections this season

By Trevor Kearney

Sports Editor

Three Oregon football players were named to the All Pacific-10 Conference first team and four others nabbed second team honors as the conference selections were announced Monday.

Senior tailback Ricky Whittle topped the list as he was the only Duck named to the first team offense and was also honored as a first team specialist for his all-purpose duties. Whittle netted 971 yards this season and had 12 rushing touchdowns, and added 419 receiving yards and one touchdown.

In terms of all-purpose production, Whittle netted 1804 yards, by far the best on the Oregon offense. Whittle was a first team selection a year ago, when the Ducks had five players on the top team.

Seniors Jeremy Asher, a linebacker, and Alex Molden, a cornerback, earned honors for their defensive efforts, while senior wide receiver Cristin McLemore, junior offensive lineman Paul Wiggins, senior defensive lineman Troy Bailey and sophomore defensive back Kenny Wheaton were named to the conference's second team.

Asher, a four-year letterman out of Tigard, had 107 total tackles this season, 65 of which were unassisted. He had 11 tackles for a loss of 38 yards and was named to the second team All-Pac-10 last year. Asher led the team with 645 total plays this year.

Molden, a four year letterman out of Colorado Springs, Colo., was on the first team last year and racked up nine deflected passes and 44 total tackles this season.

Last year Bailey made the second team as a junior and Wheaton made the second team as a redshirt freshman as the Ducks had three players on the second team en route to winning the Pac-10 title.

The Pac-10 offensive player of the year this year was USC wide receiver Keyshawn Johnson, who had 90 catches for 1,218 yards and six touchdowns. The conference's defensive player of the year was Arizona defensive end Tedy Bruschi, who led the Pac-10 in quarterback sacks with 14.5 for 96 yards in losses.

All selections were made by the conference head coaches.