

Football

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If UCLA loses, it will meet Wisconsin in the Rose Bowl, bumping Arizona to the Holiday Bowl and Oregon to Hawaii. But in the event of a Bruin victory, Rose Bowl officials would fill that slot with another team.

"That decision will be made this weekend," said Caryn Evans of the Tournament of Roses. "The Tournament is feeling that if UCLA goes to the Fiesta Bowl, Arizona would most likely come here."

Harriman Cronk of the Tournament of Roses' football committee confirmed that notion.

"Generally speaking, I think it's fair to say we'd like to keep the tradition of the Pac-10 playing the Big 10 together," Cronk

said.

Ducks honored

Oregon quarterback Akili Smith was one of nine Ducks named yesterday to the Pacific-10's all-conference squad.

Smith and UCLA quarterback Cade McNown shared conference player of the year honors, and both were named first-team All-Pac-10 selections.

Smith completed 191 of his 325 passes for 3,307 yards and 30 touchdowns on his way to leading the Ducks to an 8-3 overall record, including 5-3 in the Pac-10.

McNown has staked the Bruins to a 10-0 mark this season and a possible national championship game berth. The senior from West Linn threw for 18 touch-

downs and 2,617 yards on 162-of-288 passing and broke school records for career completions, passing yards, touchdowns and total offense.



VILLEGAS

USC linebacker Chris Claiborne was named Pac-10 defensive player of the year after recording 107 tackles, five sacks and 16 passes broken up this season. He is one of three finalists for the Butkus Award for the nation's top linebacker.

Joining Smith on the first-team all-conference squad are place-kicker Nathan Villegas and

punter Josh Bidwell. Villegas set school records for total points and both consecutive field goals and extra points and is a finalist for the Lou Groza Award as the nation's top kicker.

Bidwell is currently second in the nation with a 45.4 yard punting average. The last Oregon kicker to earn first-team honors was Tommy Thompson in 1992.

Named to this year's second team were tailback Reuben Droughns and tight end Jed Weaver. Droughns suffered what Sports Illustrated recently deemed one of the nation's top 10 most costly injuries when he broke his leg in the Ducks' overtime loss to UCLA on Oct. 17.

Droughns rushed for 824 yards

and 11 touchdowns in the season's first six games, but the Ducks never cracked the 100-yard barrier as a team in the five games after the injury.

Weaver continued the Oregon legacy at tight end set by Josh Wilcox and furthered by Blake Spence. Weaver amassed 578 yards and four touchdowns on 36 catches, including 10, one short of a school record, against Oregon State.

Receivers Tony Hartley and Damon Griffin, cornerbacks Rashad Bauman and Eric Edwards, linebackers Dietrich Moore and Chris Vandiver and defensive end Saul Patu all earned honorable mention All-Pac-10 status.

Pyle

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and fast legs have allowed Bishop to compile a 46-1 record as a collegiate starter, including back-to-back national championships in junior college, heading into the Big 12 Championship game against Texas A&M. He has run for 13 touchdowns and passed for 21 more this season to lead the Wildcats to the brink of the national-title game.

Another team ahead of Bishop and Kansas State in the running for the Fiesta Bowl also boasts an exemplary candidate as its quarterback. UCLA's Cade McNown has already been honored with the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm award and has orchestrated

20-straight wins for the Bruins, which is the country's longest winning streak.

In this season of prolific quarterbacks, two of college football's best pilots launch spirals in the Southern half of the United States. Kentucky's Tim Couch and Central Florida's Daunte Culpepper have posted gaudy statistics at the helm of their respective teams.

Couch has completed 72.3 percent of his passes for 4,275 yards and 36 touchdowns for the 7-4 Wildcats, while Culpepper has peppered opposing defenses for a Division I-A record 73.6 completion percentage, 3,690 yards and 28 touchdowns

to lead the Golden Knights to a 9-2 record.

I glance out the cab's window again, looking for help, and surprisingly see a healthy tree. While pondering this unusual sight in middle of New York City, I realize I am forgetting another worthy candidate who is also closest to my green-and-yellow-clad home.

Despite not being named the full-time starter at Oregon until last summer, quarterback Akili Smith has fueled his candidacy by passing for a school-record 3,307 yards and 30 touchdowns. His cannon arm, pinpoint accuracy and quick feet have helped the Ducks to an 8-3 record and

himself to a certain NFL future.

My driver announces we will be at the club in a few minutes, so I hurry to consider the other candidates.

Quarterbacks Donovan McNabb of Syracuse, Joe Germaine of Ohio State, Tee Martin of undefeated Tennessee and Shaun King of Tulane. Running backs Ron Dayne of Wisconsin and Kevin Faulk of Louisiana State. North Carolina State's spectacular wide receiver, Torry Holt. The list seems to go on and on.

Finally, my cab screeches to a halt in front of the club. I step out the door, pay my fare and head for the front door. I go through the candidates and all

their merits one more time.

But Williams' record-breaking, 60-yard touchdown run through the Aggies' secondary keeps creeping into the mangled confusion floating through my head.

As I stumble through the entrance and into artificial warmth, I come upon a Marley-esque revelation: If it is entirely up to me, Williams will be jamming — rather than posing — with the Heisman Trophy shortly.

Then I drifted back into reality.

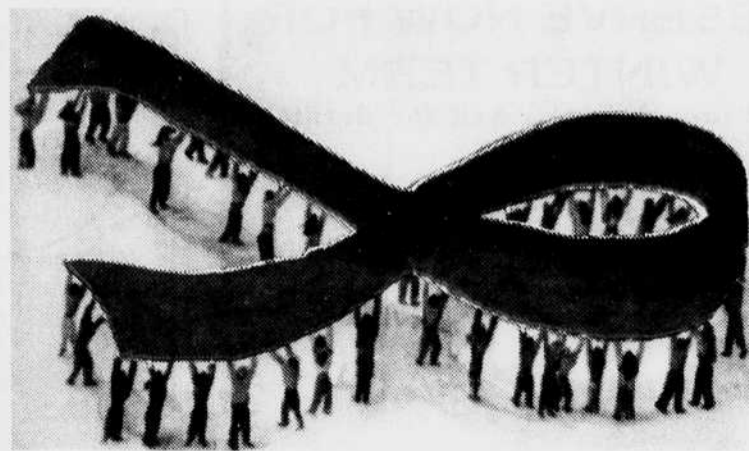
Tim Pyle is a sports reporter for the Emerald. He can be reached via e-mail at tpyle@gladstone.uoregon.edu

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