

Record-setters feeling blue



Mirjam Swanson

Pac-10 Notes

Among the products of the ever-continuing kooky play in the Pacific-10 Conference last weekend were two solemn record-setting receivers.

First, Stanford's Troy Walters set a new conference career-receiving record during the Cardinal's 44-39 loss to San Jose State.

With his second-quarter 35-yard reception, Walters — whose listed at 5 feet 8 inches in the Stanford media guide but is reportedly closer to 5'6" — surpassed Southern California's Johnnie Morton as the Pac-10's all-time leading receiver.

Walters finished the game with 186 yards on 10 catches to put his career total at 3,331 yards — 130 yards ahead of the Morton, who currently plays for the NFL's Detroit Lions.

How proud that must have made his father, Minnesota Vikings' linebackers coach Trent Walter.

Regardless, Troy Walters had no interest in discussing his accomplishment after his team's loss to a Western Athletic Conference team, telling the San Francisco Examiner, "Right now, it doesn't mean a thing."

A couple hundred miles south, UCLA's Danny Farmer was feeling the same hollow dissatisfaction.

In the 28-27 loss to Arizona State, the Bruins' two-sport star set a new UCLA record for career receiving yards with 2,651, moving ahead of Kevin Jordan, who ended his career in 1995 with 2,548.

But like Walters, Farmer hasn't yet found any enjoyment whatsoever in his accomplishment.

"Maybe in 10 or 20 years I'll look back at this day and appreciate this record, but not today," Farmer reportedly whispered to reporters.

Back that thing up

No telling how, or if, this will affect Oregon quarterbacks A.J. Feeley and Joey Harrington in Saturday's matchup, but so far this season it's been second- and even third-string quarterbacks who have wreaked the most havoc on the UCLA defense.

On Sept. 11, against Ohio State, a depleted Bruins roster that was missing a handful of starters because

of suspensions was burned by Buckeye backup Austin Murphy. He completed 11-of-16 passes for 159 yards in leading his team back from a 10-0 deficit to the 42-20 victory.

And on Sept. 25, Stanford starter Todd Husak left the game with an injury, and his backup, Joe Borchard, came in and completed 15-of-19 passes for 324 yards and five touchdowns. The Bruins lost 42-32.

Last weekend it happened again. Arizona State's backup John Leonard — in for an injured Ryan Kealy — was taken out of the game and replaced by third-string Griffin Goodman.

Goodman proceeded to throw for 141 yards and two touchdowns, including the game-winning pass to Delvon Flowers with 23 seconds left in the game.

Better with age

Washington's 467 yards of total offense against the Ducks Saturday proved that Husky quarterback Marques Tuiasosopo is improving every game and is on his way to becoming a great quarterback — or that Oregon's defensive struggles made him look so good.

Either way, the athletic quarterback earned Pac-10 offensive player of the week honors for his performance Saturday — in which he had no turnovers after having seven in the previous two weeks.

How symbolic

Washington State won a game. Whoa.

For the first time in 13 tries, less than two years after winning the Pac-10 title, the Cougars were victorious. Chalk up the big win to a motivational speech the Cougs heard prior to kick-off.

The speaker was none other than Randall Johnson, the man responsible for designing the official Cougar emblem in 1936.

After the logo-inventor was finished with his speech — reportedly about the creation of the symbol — Washington State players gave him a standing ovation that lasted more than two minutes. And Johnson almost cried.

Then the Cougars — sporting the simple, old-fashioned Cougar monogram on their helmets, rather than the scripted "Cougars" — rushed out and beat a California team apparently ill-prepared to cope with such spirit.

Afterward, Golden Bears' center John Romero commented to a local newspaper about the loss.

"It feels crappy," Romero said. "Obviously, you lose 12 straight games for a reason."

Maybe it was the lack of inspiration.

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Astros give Atlanta usual playoff pains

By Paul Newberry

The Associated Press

ATLANTA—For the Houston Astros, it was a positive start toward ending a history of postseason flops. For Atlanta, it was a troubling reminder of previous October shortfalls.

Daryle Ward hit a tiebreaking homer in the sixth off Greg Maddux and Atlanta-killer Ken Caminiti clinched it with a three-run shot in the ninth as the Astros defeated Atlanta 6-1 Tuesday in game 1 of the NL division series.

"The guys should be more relaxed now," Houston's Jeff Bagwell said. "But we've got to be careful not to get too carried away about this."

Atlanta has made an unprecedented eight straight playoff appearances, with only one World Series title to show for it. Now, they've got to win three of the next four games against Houston.

"The noose tightens a little quicker in the short series," Chipper Jones said. "It's important for us all to bring our 'A' games to the ballpark tomorrow."

Houston was a clear underdog against powerful Atlanta, having lost six of seven meetings during the regular season.

Atlanta clinched its division with a week to go, winning 11 of its last 13 games. After a 12-game winning streak in September, Houston lost nine of its last 15.

"This is a good feeling," Caminiti said. "We can hold our heads up a little bit tonight. But tomorrow is another day."

The Astros sealed the victory in the ninth with four runs against reliever Mike Remlinger.

Carl Everett had a sacrifice fly before Caminiti haunted Atlanta again.

Playing for San Diego, Caminiti hit a 10th-inning homer against Kerry Ligtenberg to win the first game of the 1998 NL championship series. The Padres went on to a 4-2 victory over Atlanta.

East champion Atlanta lost only its second division series game since the format was instituted in 1995. Before Tuesday, it was 12-1 overall, including 10 straight victories.

Houston, which clinched its third straight Central title on the final day of the season, has never won in five playoff series, including a 3-0 sweep by Atlanta in 1997. The Astros won't get swept this year, seizing the home-field advantage in the best-of-5 series.

"Two years in a row, we lost the first game," Bagwell said. "This gives us tremendous momentum."

Atlanta led the majors with 103 wins but drew the smallest crowd in Atlanta's 44-game post-season history.

The turnout of 39,119 was nearly 11,000 short of capacity at Turner Field and easily eclipsed the previous low of 42,117 for Game 1 of the 1998 NL championship series. In the right-field upper deck, only a few dozen people occupied seven sections of blue seats.

"It was certainly disappointing," Jones said.

Game 2 is Wednesday afternoon in Atlanta before the series shifts to Houston for game 3 Friday.

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