



Scott Barnett Emerald

Washington and Marques Tuiasosopo aim to be the first Pac-10 team to beat Stanford.

Game of the Week

Stanford (5-2, 5-0) at Washington (4-3, 3-1)

By Brett Williams
Oregon Daily Emerald

Talk about a Cinderella story. Prior to the season, Stanford was predicted to finish no higher than seventh in the Pacific-10 Conference.

And the Cardinal was given little respect early after losses to Texas and San Jose State.

Now, with three Pac-10 games left, Stanford controls its own destiny in the Rose Bowl race.

The Cardinal hasn't played in Pasadena on New Year's Day since 1972.

"They are finding ways to win," Oregon State head coach Dennis Erickson said. "They make plays on both sides of the football. They have a lot of character."

Erickson's Beavers gave Stanford one of its biggest conference challenges this season, a 21-17 Cardinal victory in Palo Alto, Calif.

Washington head coach Rick Neuheisel said Stanford's cohesiveness is a big reason for its success.

For the Cardinal to halt the Huskies' scoring attack, it will need to keep the ball out of the hands of Marques Tuiasosopo, Washington's versatile quarterback. Last weekend he led the

Huskies to a 31-27 comeback win at California. The Huskies are averaging 212 yards rushing in their last four games.

Stanford's offense has also been potent. Since returning from a rib injury two weeks ago, quarterback Todd Husak has been baffling defensive coordinators with his play.

The combination of Husak and flanker Troy Walters — owner of the Pac-10 record for career receiving yardage — is deadly.

"Offensively, they have such big-play potential," Neuheisel said. "When you get on a roll, players just find ways to make plays."

For Washington, stopping the Cardinal will be no small order. Washington is seventh in the conference in both pass defense and total defense.

Because of Stanford's long Rose Bowl drought, the hype in the Bay Area is not surprising. Even Stanford head coach Tyrone Willingham is smelling Roses.

"It's difficult not to," the fourth-year coach said. "At the beginning of the season, all teams have one goal, and as you progress, for some it becomes reality. We're in a position where we can't help but think about it."

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