

Title race remains cluttered

By Brett Williams
Oregon Daily Emerald

**Arizona State (4-4, 3-2)
at Southern California (3-5, 1-4)**

Arizona State entered last weekend's contest with Oregon right in the thick of the Pacific-10 Conference race. The Sun Devils still have Rose Bowl chances even after a 20-17 loss to the Ducks but need a win against USC to stay alive.

On the flip side, a season that once looked promising for Trojan football has now turned sour. USC finds itself in a battle with UCLA and Washington State to escape the Pac-10 cellar.

The Sun Devils blew a huge lead last season against the Trojans in Los Angeles, a venue Arizona State is 3-3 at all-time. Entering the fourth quarter with a 24-13 lead, the Sun Devils self destructed and allowed USC to score 22 unanswered points and steal the victory.

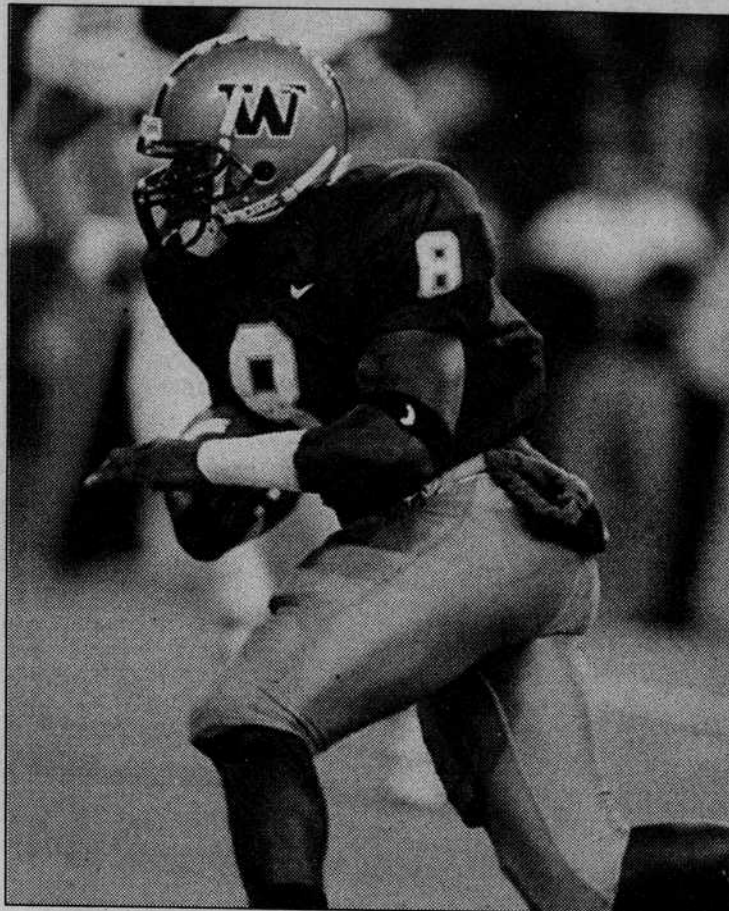
Arizona State running back J.R. Redmond — who burned the Trojans for a school-record 350 all-purpose yards, including 214 on the ground, a season ago — returns to the field after a one-game suspension. The day before the Oregon game, Redmond was suspended for violating NCAA rules.

The Sun Devils will need a stellar performance from their defense to win. Despite the Trojans' losing record, USC can put points on the board in a hurry. The play of Trojan receivers Kareem Kelly and R. Jay Soward are major reasons that USC is No. 22 in the nation in scoring offense, averaging more than 33 points per game.

**California (4-4, 3-2)
at Oregon State (5-3, 2-3)**

Usually, Reser Stadium — formerly Parker — welcomes Pac-10 foes with open arms at this time of the season, daring them to lose to the mediocre-at-best Beavers.

This season, however, Oregon State has been playing its best football in 27 years. The Beavers have a sense of urgency to get a sixth win, which would assure them of a winning record and give them an excellent chance at a



Tailback Willie Hurst and the Huskies have the inside track to the Pac-10 title. *Scott Barnett Emerald*

bowl berth.

California is eager to return to the postseason as well. The Golden Bears haven't been to a bowl since current San Francisco 49ers coach Steve Mariucci led them to the Aloha Bowl in 1996.

Last season, California was outplayed by Oregon State, but the Beavers committed six turnovers and virtually begged the Golden Bears to win the game.

Don't expect the same result this time. Oregon State sports an explosive offense, led by running back Ken Simonton, who has ran over and around Pac-10 defenses all season.

If anyone, however, can slow the explosive Simonton, it could

be California. Simonton — who is second in the Pac-10 in rushing and first in scoring — hasn't seen a defense of the Golden Bears' caliber yet this season. California is tied for No. 21 in the nation in rushing defense, allowing opponents only 109 yards per game.

When the Beavers pass or find themselves in a special teams situation, they have to keep the ball away from California cornerback Deltha O'Neal. He is ninth in the nation in kickoff returns, and he provided the difference in the Golden Bears' win over USC last week with a 67-yard interception return for a touchdown and a key 60-yard punt return to set up a California field goal.



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Game of the Week

Washington (5-3, 4-1) at Arizona (6-3, 3-2)

By Brett Williams
Oregon Daily Emerald

Washington proved it means business with a 35-30 win over Stanford last week. With three Pacific-10 Conference games remaining, the Huskies now control their own destiny in the Rose Bowl race.

But getting past the Wildcats won't be easy. Last season, No. 14 Arizona traveled to Seattle and beat the No. 20 Huskies on Wildcat quarterback Oretge Jenkins' acrobatic somersault touchdown with four seconds remaining.

Arizona went on to win the Holiday Bowl, while Washington had to settle for a visit to the Oahu Bowl, which ended with a loss to Air Force.

There are similar bowl implications this season. If Arizona wins, the Wildcats would be the front-runner for second place. If Stanford loses its final two games, Arizona could find themselves in Pasadena, Calif.

Washington has the unenviable task of shutting down the Wildcats' two playmakers, running back Trung Canidate and wideout Dennis Northcutt. That tandem leads an Arizona attack that has scorched opponents for 475 yards of total offense per game and could have a field day against a Washington defense that ranks only seventh in the Pac-10.

On the other side of the ball, Arizona's defense has a big job on its hands as well. The Wildcats, who are fourth in the conference in total defense, can't let Huskies' quarterback Marques Tuiasosopo have a big game.

Tuiasosopo earned Pac-10 offensive player of the week honors after his performance last week against Stanford. The junior from Woodinville, Wash., had one of the best outings ever by a Pac-10 quarterback against the Cardinal. Tuiasosopo racked up 509 yards of total offense, as he became the first player in Pac-10 history to account for more than 300 yards passing and 200 yards rushing in one game.

Arizona needs linebacker Marcus Bell to play a key role in slowing the Huskies' attack. Bell was named Pac-10 defensive player of the week after his 21-tackle performance against UCLA last week.

If Washington's offensive line is unable to stop the Wildcats' front four, it could be a long day for the Huskies. Arizona recorded nine sacks for losses totaling 78 yards against the Bruins.



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