

Pac-10

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Winning it, that's real."

In order to win it, the Huskies are banking on Marques Tuiasosopo to lead them to the promised land. The senior is coming off a season in which he completed 171-of-295 passes for 2,221 yards and 12 touchdowns, and has emerged as a potential Heisman Trophy candidate.

Neuheisal likes the ball in his quarterback's hands, and often calls for the option. In fact, a year ago, Tuiasosopo ranked 10th in the Pac-10 in rushing with 541 yards and six touchdowns.

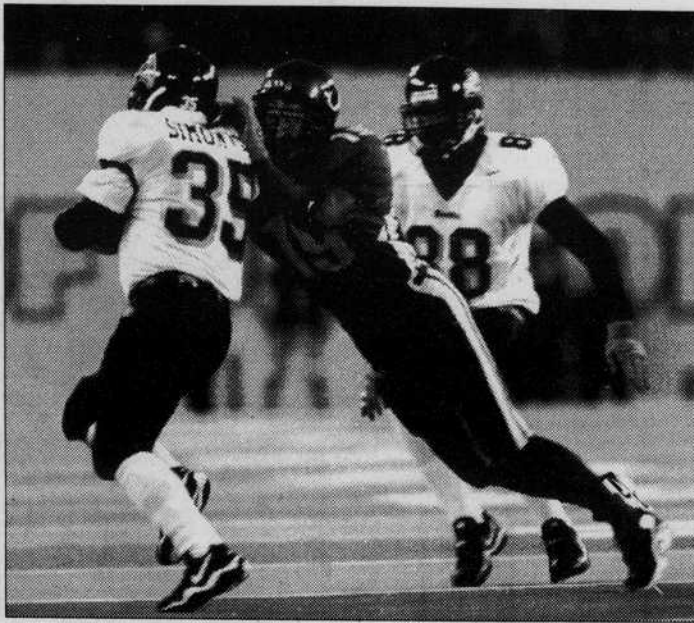
"The sky is the limit for this guy," Neuheisal said. "I know his teammates look up to him, not only because he is a very talented player, but also because of his work ethic. His experience meter is on the climb and I think that will correlate itself into an even more productive senior year."

But there are concerns that Neuheisal's aggressive style of play could get his quarterback injured, which would be devastating considering the Huskies defense is their biggest question mark.

The defensive line is getting a make over, meaning that the importance of the three returning starters in the secondary offering run support is all the more necessary. The key member of that threesome is free safety Hakim Akbar, an outstanding athlete who amazed many when he recorded a 38.5-inch vertical jump, 350-pound bench press and 493-pound squat during the Huskies' annual off-season testing day.

Overall, Neuheisal is excited about his team, but admits there is a long way to go until thoughts of Pasadena pop into his head.

"We have a lot of work to do," he said. "We have a great schedule



OSU running back Ken Simonton (35) will be key to the Beavers' success in 2000.

ahead of us with a lot of competitive teams. We know who we are. If we set the standard of how we play in the fourth quarter we are going to have an exciting time and be in the race again in November."

Washington will most likely be vying for the title with strong league contender USC, who will be led by a strong defense that has 10 returning starters in it.

The Trojans were an extreme disappointment last season when they started out 3-6, but managed to win their last three games to somewhat salvage the season. It wasn't good enough to keep quiet speculation on a coaching change, as Paul Hackett knows that this year is a make or break year for him.

One of the major reasons USC is considered a Pac-10 favorite — being ranked as high as ninth in the nation by the Sporting News — is the health

of quarterback Carson Palmer.

Palmer has fully healed from a broken collarbone that forced him to miss nine games a season ago. His season ended at Autzen Stadium in Eugene last year when he dropped back to pass, found no receiver open and scrambled — directly into Oregon rover Michael Fletcher, who crunched him.


Months later, Palmer is back and Hackett plans to employ the shotgun offense, which should lead to some high passing yardage.

"Carson is one of the best young quarterbacks in the country," Hackett said. "His pure passing ability sets him apart. He is 100 percent healthy now and there is no reason that he can't be ahead of where he was last year by the time the 2000 season starts."


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Sept. 2	Nevada	12:30 p.m.
Sept. 9	Wisconsin	12:30 p.m.
Sept. 16	Idaho	3:30 p.m.
Sept. 23	UCLA*	12:30 p.m.
Sept. 30	Washington*	12:30 p.m.
Oct. 14	USC	TBA
Oct. 21	Arizona*	7:15 p.m.
	Homecoming	
Oct. 28	Arizona State	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 4	Washington State*	2:00 p.m.
Nov. 11	California*	12:30 p.m.
Nov. 18	Oregon State*	1:00 p.m.
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	*Pac-10 Conference games	
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