

Pac-10

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then-No. 3 ranked Alabama. The victory came at a cost, however, as sophomore starting quarterback Cory Paus was forced to leave the game early with a separated throwing shoulder. Paus is hopeful to be back for the Pac-10 home opener this Saturday against Oregon, but if not, the quarterback duties will belong to sophomore Ryan McCann.

Luckily, the Bruins won't rely on their quarterbacks as much this year due to the healthy return of running back DeShaun Foster, who missed most of last year with an ankle sprain. In two seasons, Foster has piled up 1,048 yards with 16 touchdowns, and expect those totals to improve dramatically, as well as the Bruin win total.

5. ARIZONA WILDCATS

Last season: 6-6, 3-5 Pac-10, tied for sixth

Head coach: Dick Tomey, 14th year

Returning starters: 11 (7 offense, 4 defense)

Player to watch: QB Ortege Jenkins

Outlook: Arizona was on a high after it finished the 1998 season with a big Holiday Bowl win over Nebraska and a 12-1 record.

Then came the No. 3 preseason ranking in '99, immediately followed by its deflating 41-7 drubbing by Penn State to open the season. The Wildcats would never recover and didn't even reach a bowl game.

A whole new year is here and already they are being written off by the media, who picked them eighth in the Pac-10 in its preseason poll. Starting quarterback Ortege Jenkins, for one, relishes the underdog role.

"We're going to be the guys out headhunting and nobody's going to be headhunting for us," Jenkins said. "It takes a lot of pressure off."

But the pressure to win is squarely

on the senior's shoulders now that former QB Keith Smith is gone and the two-quarterback system has vanished.

Helping out the Wildcat attack is its experienced line on both sides of the ball and the potential star in sophomore wide receiver Bobby Wade.

This is the most intriguing team in the league. The Cats could finish as high as third, or as low as ninth.

6. OREGON STATE BEAVERS

Last season: 7-5, 4-4 Pac-10, fifth

Head coach: Dennis Erickson
Returning starters: 13 (6 offense, 7 defense)



Player to watch: TB Ken Simon-ton

Outlook: Head coach Dennis Erickson signed a new contract. Many Beaver fans sprinted to the ticket booth over the off-season to gobble up season tickets. And quarterback Jonathan Smith and tailback Ken Simon-ton return with that winning taste still in their mouths.

But will it be enough to record another winning season after eclipsing the .500 mark for the first time since 1970?

The key will be the passing game because Simon-ton can't continue to receive 40 carries per game — as he did in the Beavers shaky season-opening 21-19 win over Eastern Washington on Sept. 2.

A big difference this year will be that teams will not overlook Oregon State, making Erickson's encore season all the more tougher.

7. STANFORD CARDINAL

Last season: 8-4, 7-1 Pac-10, first

Head coach: Tyrone Willingham, sixth year

Returning starters: 12 (7 offense, 5 de-



fense)
Player to watch: WR DeRonnie

Pitts

Outlook: Once again, the Stanford Cardinal head into a Pac-10 season with everything to gain and nothing to lose. Nothing these guys do should surprise anybody after last year's shocking campaign that was capped with them playing in the "Granddaddy of them all," the Rose Bowl.

This year the quarterback duties belong to Randy Fasani, who has waited three long years to take over the helm of the team. Last year's back-up, Joe Borchard, was the apparent starter, but was wooed away by baseball's Chicago White Sox. So, Borchard got \$5 million dollars richer and Fasani got the starting job for a Pac-10 team. Not a bad trade off.

Fasani will have some help on the offense with the Pac-10's best returning receiver in DeRonnie Pitts and the explosive running attack of Kerry Carter. But with its poor defense, the Cardinal could be heading for a reality check this season.

Then again, they could win it all. Who knows?



8. ARIZONA STATE SUN DEVILS

Last season: 6-6, 5-3 Pac-10, fourth

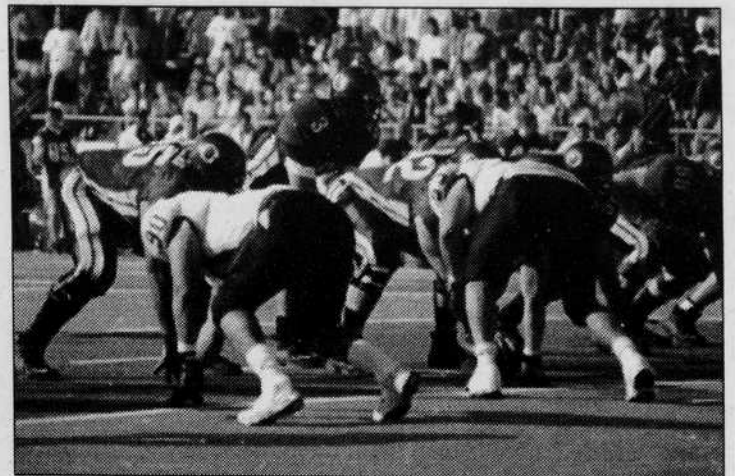
Head coach: Bruce Snyder, ninth year

Returning starters: 12 (7 offense, 5 defense)

Player to watch: TE Todd Heap

Outlook: Senior quarterback Ryan Kealy missed the spring while rehabilitating his torn anterior cruciate ligament, and then got arrested for driving under the influence a couple months later. Head coach Bruce Snyder suspended his quarterback indefinitely.

At least the Sun Devils return one of the nation's best tight ends in Todd Heap and top running back Delvon Flowers. Oh wait, Flowers was knocked out for the entire season back on Aug. 17 when he suffered a torn ACL in a morning scrimmage.



The 2000 Ducks will line up against their Pac-10 foes with the Rose Bowl in their sights.

It's going to be a long, dry season down there in Tempe.



9. WASHINGTON STATE COUGERS

Last season: 3-9, 1-7 Pac-10, 10th

Head coach: Mike Price, 12th

Returning starters: 11 (6 offense, 5 defense)

Player to watch: FS Lamont Thompson

Outlook: Head coach Mike Price looked around at the new locker rooms in his stadium, the new omnium turf on the field and the new uniforms on his players.

"Wow, it feels like a Pac-10 team," he joked.

Coach, the problem is that no matter how new everything is, winning is what never gets old. But losing sure does.

And already, the newly appointed starting quarterback, Jason Gesser, is having problems with it. Gesser entered the season 29-0 as a starter (28-0 in high school, 1-0 last season), but soon tasted defeat in the Cougars first game of the year against Stan-

ford on Sept. 2.

"I've never lost a game my whole life," Gesser said. "I'm not used to this stuff."

Don't worry Jason, you will be soon.

10. CALIFORNIA BEARS

Last season: 4-7, 3-5 Pac-10, tied for sixth

Head coach: Tom Holmoe, fourth year

Returning Starters: 12 (8 offense, 4 defense)

Player to watch: DE Andre Carter

Outlook: Not too pretty.

Head coach Tom Holmoe is again counting on hyped-up sophomore quarterback Kyle Boller to be the real deal. But don't count on it. Last year Boller only completed 38.6 percent of his passes — the worst mark by a Cal starter since the 1947 season.

While the defense will continue to be the team's strength, it lost some key players from last year and will be counting heavily on defensive end Andre Carter and cornerback Chidi Iwuoma to lead the way.

Hey at least they'll be strong in one aspect this year: They'll be holding up the rest of the Pac-10.

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