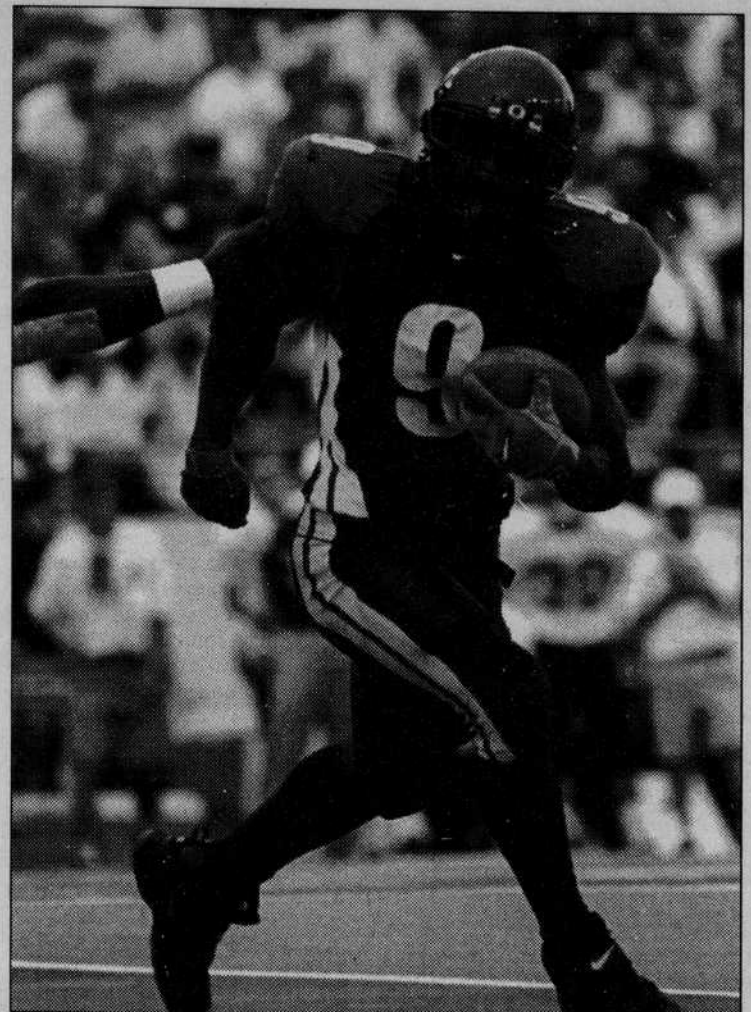




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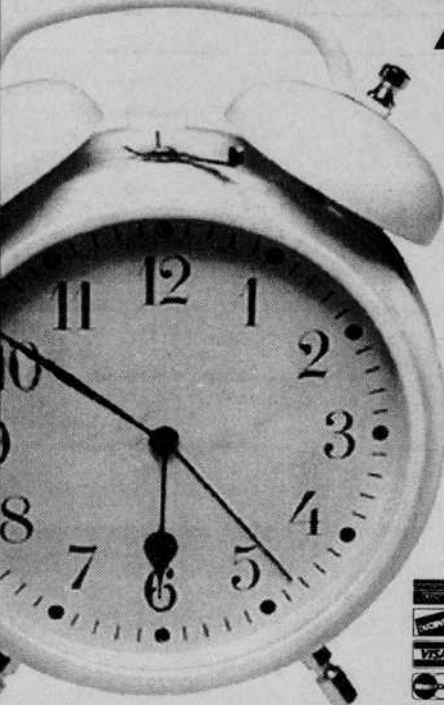


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Dan Brunell Emerald
 Oregon junior tailback Maurice Morris ran all over Washington for 167 yards on 31 carries and helped the Ducks vault into the Top-10 of The Associated Press poll.

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■ Oregon's No. 9 national ranking leads five Pac-10 teams in the AP Top-25

By Scott Pesznecker
 Oregon Daily Emerald

For the first time in half-a-century, The Associated Press said the Oregon football team is better than No. 10 in the country.

The Ducks, debuting in the poll at No. 20 last week, jumped up to the No. 9 spot Sunday after beating Washington 23-16 at Autzen Stadium on Saturday. Oregon is now the highest-ranked team in the Pac-10, besting No. 13 Washington, No. 16 UCLA, No. 18 Southern California and No. 23 Oregon State.

"Certainly the rankings are exciting," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said on Sunday. "It's a midterm grade report in the sense that it means we're doing all right, but I also don't put a lot of stock in it. I do feel that it's much more important how you finish than how you start."

The last time the Ducks were ranked as high as ninth by The Associated Press was Nov. 30, 1948, when the Pacific Coast Conference co-champions went 9-2 under head coach Jim Aiken and lost in the Cotton Bowl, 21-13, to Southern Methodist.

The highest any Oregon football team has ever been in the polls was Len Casanova's 1964 squad, which went undefeated in its first six games, rising to No. 7 on Oct. 27, 1964. However, Casanova's Ducks failed to go to the postseason that year after winning just one of their last four games.

If Oregon beats the Trojans in two weeks, it could tie or beat the school record of its highest-ranked football team.

But Bellotti knows how deceiving the national polls can be. After all, Wisconsin, ranked No. 5 when it beat Oregon on Sept. 9, is now ranked No. 24 — one spot behind the Beavers.

"I've told [my team] that the most important thing is surviving success," Bellotti said. "Handling prosperity as well as adversity, making sure that we work our tails off to live up to that ranking."

The Ducks aren't the only nearby football team making a splash in the national pool. Oregon State, regarded as a Pac-10 pushover for years, entered the polls this week at No. 23 after stunning then-No. 8 USC in Corvallis, 31-21.

« *Certainly the rankings are exciting. It's a midterm grade report in the sense that it means we're doing all right, but I also don't put a lot of stock in it.*

Mike Bellotti
 Oregon football coach »

Oregon State hasn't been in the Top-25 since being ranked No. 13 in 1968.

"I think Oregon State is for real," Bellotti said. "They have a great defense and a great running back. I still think USC has arguably the best talent in the conference."

Southern California was ranked eighth after a convincing 29-5 victory over Penn State, followed by wins against Colorado and San Jose State.

Meanwhile, UCLA, considering itself to be a national-title contender when ranked No. 6 two weeks ago, slipped from No. 15 to No. 16 after scraping by unranked Arizona State, 38-31, in Los Angeles. The Bruins' slide this week, despite the win, can be attributed to the defense allowing 21 Sun Devil points before coming back to win.

The Bruins were dropped from No. 6 to No. 15 when the Ducks beat them, 29-10, at Autzen Stadium on Sept. 23. The Huskies experienced a drop as well after their loss to Oregon, from No. 6 to No. 13.



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