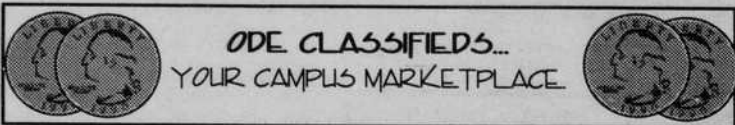




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# M's are wild about playoffs

By Ken Peters  
The Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Wild card or division title, it didn't seem to matter a bit to the Seattle Mariners amid their champagne-spraying frenzy in the club house.

The Mariners clinched the AL wild card spot and shut Cleveland out of the playoffs Sunday, getting home runs from Alex Rodriguez and David Bell to beat Anaheim 5-2.

"It's been a long time, and all the emotion broke loose," said Seattle manager Lou Piniella, whose

Mariners last were in the playoffs in 1997.

"To go down to the last day, the last pitch of the last game, makes it especially rewarding," added Piniella, who at times looked as if he were standing under a waterfall as players gleefully dumped champagne, beer, and the contents of several ice chests on him.

"It's awesome," Seattle's Jay Buhner said. "We definitely made it interesting. But at the same time, any time you can get to the postseason, that's what it's all about."

Rodriguez, expected to become baseball's most expensive free agent after the season, also was relieved the Mariners were headed to the playoffs.

"It's been a stressful situation the last 10 days because we've been in a position where we had to do a little scoreboard watching, and in the position where we had to win," the Seattle shortstop said.

"I take my hat off to Cleveland and Oakland. The A's deserve to have won the division, and Cleveland really made it hard for us. We're very blessed to be in this position."

Victories by the Mariners and Athletics, who beat Texas 3-0, avoided any ties and several complex scenarios that could have involved one-game playoffs by any of the three contending teams.

Also, the Athletics did not have to play a makeup game Monday at Tampa Bay because they already held the tiebreaker over the Mariners, going 9-4 against them.

The Mariners, who hadn't been

## 2000 Major League Baseball Playoffs

### National League

Atlanta vs. St. Louis, Game 1: Tuesday at 10:07 a.m. (ESPN)

N.Y. Mets vs. San Francisco, Game 1: Wednesday at 1:07 p.m. (ESPN)

### American League

Seattle vs. Chicago, Game 1: Tuesday at 1:07 p.m. (ESPN)

N.Y. Yankees vs. Oakland, Game 1: Tuesday at 5:08 p.m. (NBC)

out of first place in the AL West since June 28 until they fell one-half game back of Oakland last Friday, open the best-of-5 first round at the Chicago White Sox on Tuesday.

The Mariners saw on the Anaheim scoreboard before their game started that Cleveland had won, then late in the game against the Angels that Oakland also had won.

"Before the first pitch, we knew Cleveland had won, so that was kind of a stressful situation for us going against a great Anaheim team," said Rodriguez, whose solo homer in the fourth was his 41st of the year.

Bell hit a tiebreaking solo homer in the seventh and the Mariners got strong pitching from starter Aaron Sele, reliever Arthur Rhodes (5-8) and Kazuhiro Sasaki.

Sasaki got his 37th save, breaking the major league record for a rookie set by Todd Worrell with St. Louis in 1986.

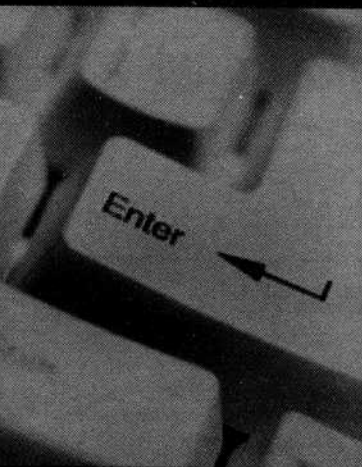
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win, win,  
win**  
situation.



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# Beavers crack Top-25

By Tara Burghart  
The Associated Press

CORVALLIS — These are new times for Oregon State.

No longer the dregs of the Pac-10, the Beavers are off to their first 4-0 start since 1957. They're even beating Southern California and joining the Top 25, entering at No. 23.

"Tradition doesn't work anymore," linebacker Nick Barnett said after the 31-21 win over a USC team ranked No. 8 at the time. "This is just one step in the program. We're not done yet."

Last year, the Beavers had their first winning season in 29 years, then went to their first bowl since 1965.

On Saturday, they defeated USC for the first time since 1967, ending their conference-record streak of 26 losses to the Trojans.

"We proved we can play with anybody, and it felt real good," said Oregon State's Chad Johnson, who had a TD catch.

Forty miles down the road, Oregon won its 18th in a row in Autzen Stadium. The Ducks, who have surged to No. 9, upset Washington 23-16. Oregon is 2-0 in the conference and 4-1 overall after a close loss to Wisconsin.

Oregon State faces Washington next week in Husky Stadium. The Huskies dropped from No. 6 to No. 13 in the poll.

"They're going to be prepared for us. If USC wasn't, then they should have been, and I'm sure UW will be," Oregon State safety Terrence Carroll said.

The Beavers jumped to a 14-0 lead before the Trojans tied it early in the second quarter on an 80-yard fumble recovery.

With 1:18 to play, the Beavers were up 24-21 and trying to eat the clock. Then Ken Simonton ran 36 yards for his third touchdown. He finished with 37 carries for 234 yards, the second-most in history

by one player against USC.

Simonton "is one of the best that we will play against," USC coach Paul Hackett said. "I thought the defense played hard, but obviously, you can't let a man run for 200 yards."

Hackett blamed himself for not getting a play in quick enough to Carson Palmer in the third quarter when the score was 14-14.

Palmer completed a touchdown pass on fourth down to Antoine Harris, but it was nullified for delay of game and the Trojans then missed a field goal.

*"The issue with the game was the Trojan didn't make the plays that the Trojans needed to make when the game was on the line."*

**Paul Hackett**  
USC coach

"That would have made it 21-14, which would have been the way to start the third quarter," Hackett said. "From that point on in the game, the offense sputtered. There were moments, but we couldn't put anything together."

Hackett says his team simply did not do what they had to do to win.

"The issue with the game was the Trojan didn't make the plays that the Trojans needed to make when the game was on the line," Hackett said.

With Washington looming, Oregon State coach Dennis Erickson plans to let his players and staff celebrate a bit.

"We've got the Huskies next week and we know that," he said. "But we're 4-0 and 1-0 in the Pac-10, and it's been awhile."