

Ranked teams put records on the line Saturday

By Richard Rosenblatt
The Associated Press

Will he or won't he?

Not even Michael Vick knows for sure.

A sprained right ankle threatens to keep Virginia Tech's flashy quarterback on the sideline when the second-ranked Hokies visit No. 3 Miami Saturday in what boils down to a national title elimination game.

"I think Michael is getting better, but I don't know if there's enough time," Hokies coach Frank Beamer says. "He's still questionable, and it is going to be a last-minute decision."

Although Virginia Tech (8-0, 6-0 Big East) pulled out a 37-34 win over Pittsburgh last week with Dave Meyer replacing Vick for the second half, the Hurricanes (6-1, 3-0) present bigger problems.

Miami, the nation's top scoring team at 45 points per game, knocked off a then-No. 1 Florida State to end a five-game losing streak against the team and would like nothing better than to end a five-game slide against Virginia Tech, which routed the Hurricanes 43-10 in '99.

The winner of this Big East Conference showdown moves a giant step closer to the Orange Bowl, this year's site of the Bowl Championship Series' national title game Jan. 3. The Hokies are second and the Hurricanes fifth in the BCS standings, which determine who plays in the title game based on a formula using polls, computer rankings, schedule strength and wins.

Vick, among the top Heisman Trophy contenders, has 1,023 yards and seven TDs passing and 584 yards and eight TDs rushing. The Hokies are fifth in scoring at 42 points per game.

The Hurricanes are led by Ken Dorsey, who has thrown for 1,675 yards and 14 TDs, and running backs James Jackson — 185 yards last week — and a healthy Clinton Portis.

If Vick plays, he will wear a special brace molded to his foot. "I'm better, but I'm still not able to do what I do," he says.

In Tallahassee, Fla., Bowden Bowl II convenes Saturday night when No. 10 Clemson (8-1, 6-1 ACC) plays No. 4 Florida State (8-1, 6-0) in a game with national title implications only for defending

champion Florida State.

Tommy Bowden's Tigers lost their title chance with a 31-28 loss to Georgia Tech last week, a game quarterback Woodrow Dantzler left after reinjuring his left ankle. If Dantzler can't go, freshman Willie Simmons gets his first start. Simmons, who passed for 131 yards and ran for 25 yards in the Yellow Jackets, also replaced Dantzler two weeks ago and matched a school record with four TD passes in a 38-24 win over North Carolina.

But Tommy's Tigers can end Florida State's bid to repeat and make poppa Bobby Bowden an unhappy coach. Last year, Florida State rallied for a 17-14 victory as Bobby Bowden claimed career win No. 300.

Florida State, coming off a 58-14 win over North Carolina State, finally has a healthy Chris Weinke. Weinke, another top Heisman candidate, has been recovering from a sprained left foot since it was first injured against Maryland on Sept. 28. Despite the injury, Weinke has thrown for 2,969 yards and 23 TDs.

Florida State is scoring 43.3 points per game, the Tigers 41.4.

In other games involving top-25 teams, it's No. 1 Oklahoma at Baylor; Kansas at No. 5 Nebraska; No. 6 Florida at Vanderbilt; No. 7 Oregon at Washington State; Arizona at No. 8 Washington; No. 9 TCU at San Jose State; No. 12 Michigan at No. 21 Northwestern; Louisville at No. 13 Southern Mississippi; No.

0), one of only three remaining undefeated teams, are ninth against the run at 93.1 ypg.

Oklahoma (7-0, 4-0 Big 12) plays its first game as the No. 1 team against Baylor, one of the nation's weaker teams. The Sooners are led by Josh Heupel (2,194 yards, 12 TDs), who threw for 300 yards and a TD in last week's 31-14 win over Nebraska. The Bears (2-6, 0-5) scored their first points in four games last week — a 48-14 loss to Texas.

Nebraska (7-1, 4-1 Big 12), meanwhile, is likely to take out its frustration on Kansas (4-4, 2-3), a team it has beaten 31 years in a row. On Nov. 11, the Huskers are at Kansas State and with a win in Manhattan, coach Frank Solich's team may find itself back in the national title chase — with a rematch against Oklahoma looming in the Big 12 title game on Dec. 2.

In another game of note, Alabama (3-5, 3-2 SEC) is at LSU (5-3, 3-2).

In Mike DuBose's first game as the Tide's lame-duck coach, the Tigers will try to end a 15-game winless streak (0-14-1) against Alabama that back to 1969.

DuBose will resign at the end of a rocky season, one in which Alabama started out No. 3 in the AP preseason poll but faltered badly, including an embarrassing 40-38 homecoming loss to Central Florida last Saturday. The Tide need to win their final three games to qualify for a bowl berth.

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14 Oregon State at California; Michigan State at No. 16 Ohio State; No. 18 Mississippi State at Kentucky; Iowa State at No. 19 Kansas State; No. 20 Texas at Texas Tech; and No. 24 Texas A&M at Oklahoma State.

One of the more intriguing matchups features the nation's top two rushers — TCU's LaDainian Tomlinson against San Jose State's Deonce Whitaker.

Tomlinson, who leads the nation with 184.7 yards per game, could have a field day against the Spartans, ranked 108th of 115 I-A teams in run defense at 220.6 ypg. Whitaker averages 178.7 yards per game for San Jose State (6-3, 4-1 WAC). The Horned Frogs (7-0, 4-

Bowl Championship Series

Rank	Team	Poll	Comp	Sked	Loss	Total
1.	Oklahoma	1.0	1.00	0.46	0	2.46
2.	Virginia Tech	2.0	4.43	0.72	0	7.15
3.	Florida State	4.0	2.29	0.64	1	7.93
4.	Nebraska	5.5	3.00	0.68	1	10.18
5.	Miami (FL)	3.0	5.57	0.80	1	10.37
6.	Florida	5.5	4.57	0.26	1	11.35
7.	Oregon	7.5	7.57	0.60	1	16.67
8.	Washington	7.5	8.57	0.24	1	17.31
9.	TCU	9.0	10.57	4.44	0	24.01
10.	Purdue	12.0	10.71	0.92	2	25.63
11.	Oregon State	14.0	11.43	1.75	1	28.19
12.	Michigan	12.0	15.14	1.44	2	30.58
13.	Clemson	10.0	16.43	3.68	1	31.11
14.	Notre Dame	15.5	14.21	0.32	2	32.03
15.	Miss. State	18.0	15.07	0.16	2	35.23

ESPN/USA Today Coaches Poll

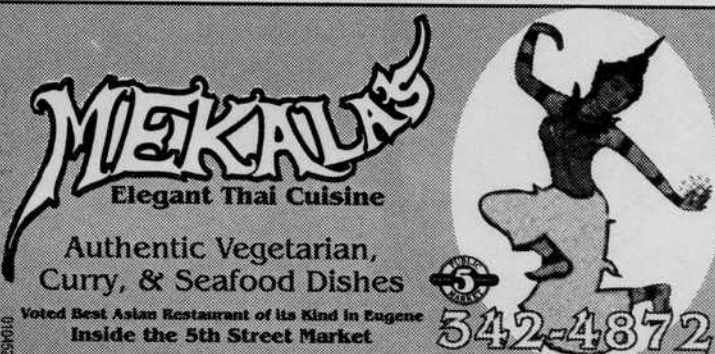
Rank	Team	Record	Pts.	Pvs.
1.	Oklahoma	7-0	1,470	3
2.	Virginia Tech	8-0	1,403	2
3.	Miami (FL)	6-1	1,324	5
4.	Florida State	8-1	1,289	6
5.	Florida	7-1	1,217	7
6.	Nebraska	7-1	1,180	1
7.	Washington	7-1	1,076	9
8.	Oregon	7-1	1,047	10
9.	TCU	7-0	984	11
10.	Clemson	8-1	964	4
11.	So. Miss	6-1	805	13
12.	Michigan	6-2	779	15
13.	Purdue	7-2	777	16
14.	Oregon State	7-1	646	17
15.	Kansas State	7-2	590	8
16.	Notre Dame	6-2	489	19
17.	Georgia	6-2	486	12
18.	Miss. State	5-2	445	21
19.	Ohio State	6-2	444	13
20.	Texas	6-2	426	20
21.	Colorado State	7-1	233	24
22.	Auburn	7-2	222	25
23.	Northwestern	6-2	201	NR
24.	So. Carolina	7-2	184	18
25.	Texas A&M	6-2	151	NR

Associated Press Top-25

Rank	Team	Record	Pts.	Pvs.
1.	Oklahoma	7-0	1,749	3
2.	Virginia Tech	8-0	1,633	2
3.	Miami (FL)	6-1	1,602	4
4.	Florida State	8-1	1,539	6
5.	Nebraska	7-1	1,425	1
6.	Florida	7-1	1,395	8
7.	Oregon	7-1	1,378	7
8.	Washington	7-1	1,262	9
9.	TCU	7-0	1,150	11
10.	Clemson	8-1	1,071	5
11.	Purdue	7-2	1,017	16
12.	Michigan	6-2	925	15
13.	So. Miss	6-1	897	14
14.	Oregon State	7-1	893	18
15.	Notre Dame	6-2	674	19
16.	Ohio State	6-2	563	12
17.	Georgia	6-2	544	13
18.	Miss. State	5-2	515	20
19.	Kansas State	7-2	443	10
20.	Texas	6-2	399	22
21.	Northwestern	6-2	391	23
22.	So. Carolina	7-2	283	17
23.	Auburn	7-2	274	25
24.	Texas A&M	6-2	240	NR
25.	Georgia Tech	6-2	178	NR



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