

# Where they'll go, nobody knows

■ Oregon's postseason bowl picture will remain out of focus until after Saturday's Civil War

By Scott Pesznecker  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Despite being undefeated in the Pacific-10 Conference, despite losing just once to then-No. 5 Wisconsin on the road, despite earning a best-ever No. 5 ranking and despite being the front-runner in the race for the Rose Bowl all season long, Oregon could find itself in Hawaii on Christmas.

Say what?

Really, it could happen.

If the situation arose in which Wisconsin was invited to the Sun Bowl, chances are that the bowl commissioners wouldn't want another Badgers vs. Ducks matchup. Their reasoning would be that besides Oregon and Wisconsin already playing each other once this year, the two teams will meet in Eugene next season.

So, it would be down the ladder to one of the Hawaii bowls.

"I don't even know how you can even talk about all the madness that flows with these ballgames," receiver Marshaun Tucker said. "One thing we know is we're trying to go to the Rose Bowl, so we're trying to go this weekend and win it. And not just for that, but it's for bragging rights."

And nothing but Oregon State stands between Oregon and Pasadena. The Ducks are the only Pac-10 football team that can go to the Rose Bowl without needing help from another team.

Which is why it seems so peculiar that the Ducks could slide as far as Honolulu.

"If you pay attention to that, where's it going to get you?" Tucker said. "We have to really stay focused and know that we have a job to do this weekend."

"I did just find out that someone's picking us to go the Sun Bowl this game," tight end Justin Peelle said. "It doesn't really matter - we're shooting for the Rose Bowl."

"Christmas in Hawaii wouldn't be that bad, anyway."

Oregon's postseason destination, if it loses to Oregon State, is fuzzy at best. If almost every team in the top-six of the Bowl Championships Series rankings loses this weekend, the Ducks could go to the Orange Bowl, although the

odds of that happening now are about a million-to-one.

The Holiday Bowl isn't completely out of the picture, but pretty darn close. If Washington went to the Rose Bowl and Oregon State received a BCS bid to the Fiesta Bowl, then the Ducks would play in San Diego. However, the Beavers, even if more deserving, would probably be overlooked for Virginia Tech.

Then there's the Sun Bowl situation, which could lead to the Hawaii scenario. So, where the Ducks will go, nobody knows - unless they beat the Beavers, and then it's straight to the Rose Bowl.

"All the things that are riding on this game makes it that much more exciting," linebacker Michael Callier said. "Some people talk about the pressure and all that, but I think it's all positive pressure. It's a big game for the state of Oregon. I don't think this game has ever been so important."

But according to Las Vegas gamblers, beating Oregon State will be easier said than done. The Ducks are the contest's four-point underdogs on the betting lines.

"We are underdogs," Callier said. "Before we started winning, we were always underdogs. I don't mind that at all. Business as usual."

Another fun tid-bit to top a week of craziness: Washington, which Oregon beat Sept. 30, could go to the Orange Bowl if Oregon beats Oregon State and if Oklahoma loses to Kansas State in the Big 12 title game. And, of course, the Huskies must beat the Cougars.

Considering the Cougars' Pac-10 reputation and the way that Kansas State beat Nebraska last Saturday, perhaps Washington really could go to the national championship.

Which would be even more comical, because just a couple weeks ago, Oregon seemed to be in the Pac-10's drivers' seat in that race, too.

So much hype and so many predictions, but the Ducks seem poised under the national spotlight, just as they have all season long.

"We're handling it pretty well," Peelle said. "We're having fun with it a little bit, but we know we've got a job to do. We've got things we want to accomplish and we can't let this affect us at all. It's fun for the state, and it's fun for both programs, all this media attention, but that stuff doesn't matter. What matters is what happens on Saturday."

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We hope you will join us, whether in person at Reser Stadium in Corvallis, or through television and radio. It should be a fantastic contest—college football at its best. This civil war game brings together two first-rate and nationally ranked teams with lots of national attention, post-season bowl ambitions, and a sell-out crowd of football enthusiasts with enormous pride, investment and spirit! We look forward to your participation. We urge you to bring to this game your commitment to making it a safe, civil and successful sports event for everyone.

We urge you to:

- Drive safely to and from the game or your choice of viewing venues;
- Monitor your consumption of alcohol—don't drink if you're a minor and don't drive under the influence of alcohol;
- Leave the physical 'fight' for the two teams—don't be part of any brawling or fisticuffs. The players will provide the competition—they need you as an enthusiastic but orderly and lawful audience;
- Respect the property of OSU and your fellow fans—as hosts this year OSU has prepared a campus event that is welcoming to Beavers and Ducks alike, so please be gracious hosts and respectful visitors.

From the first kick-off to the last minute of regulation play or any overtime, this will be a football game to remember. We ask your cooperation in making this a safe and successful sports event!

**Finally, enjoy the game! And remember: Go Ducks and Beavers! Go Beavers and Ducks!**

Mitch Barnhart, Athletic Director, OSU  
Dennis Erickson, Head Football Coach, OSU

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