

GAME DAY

Sports Editor:

Adam Jude
adamjude@dailymerald.com
Assistant Sports Editor:
Jeff Smith
jeffsmith@dailymerald.com

Best Bet
Oregon State at USC,
12:30 p.m., ABC



Friday, November 2, 2001

Assume the Pac-10 will have a wild ending

With a month remaining in the season, Stanford appears to be the outright favorite to win the Pacific-10 Conference. In fact, in writing this column, I wanted to say how we might as well give the conference championship trophy to the Cardinal right now.

And why not?

Head coach Tyrone Willingham's squad — minus its starting quarterback — has upset consecutive top-5 teams in Oregon and UCLA. The Cardinal are ranked No. 6 in the Bowl Championship Series, and a win over 11th-ranked Washington would only push them higher. And they have, according to the BCS, the toughest schedule in the country.



Adam Jude
Out in left field

Why not just give them a bid to the Fiesta Bowl now?

One word: parity.

First, Stanford must win in another tough atmosphere against the Huskies, a team that looks far from its Rose Bowl form of a year ago, but is somehow pulling out Oregon-like victories all over the place (try four wins by three points or less).

If the Cardinal get past Washington and roll over Arizona and California (as they should), the only other question marks lie in their two nonconference games against Notre Dame (which is very un-Notre Dame-like this year) and San Jose State, a team the Cardinal have lost to the last two years.

It's easy to assume, though, that with an inexperienced quarterback in Chris Lewis and a suspect defense, the Cardinal could easily slip in one of their five remaining games.

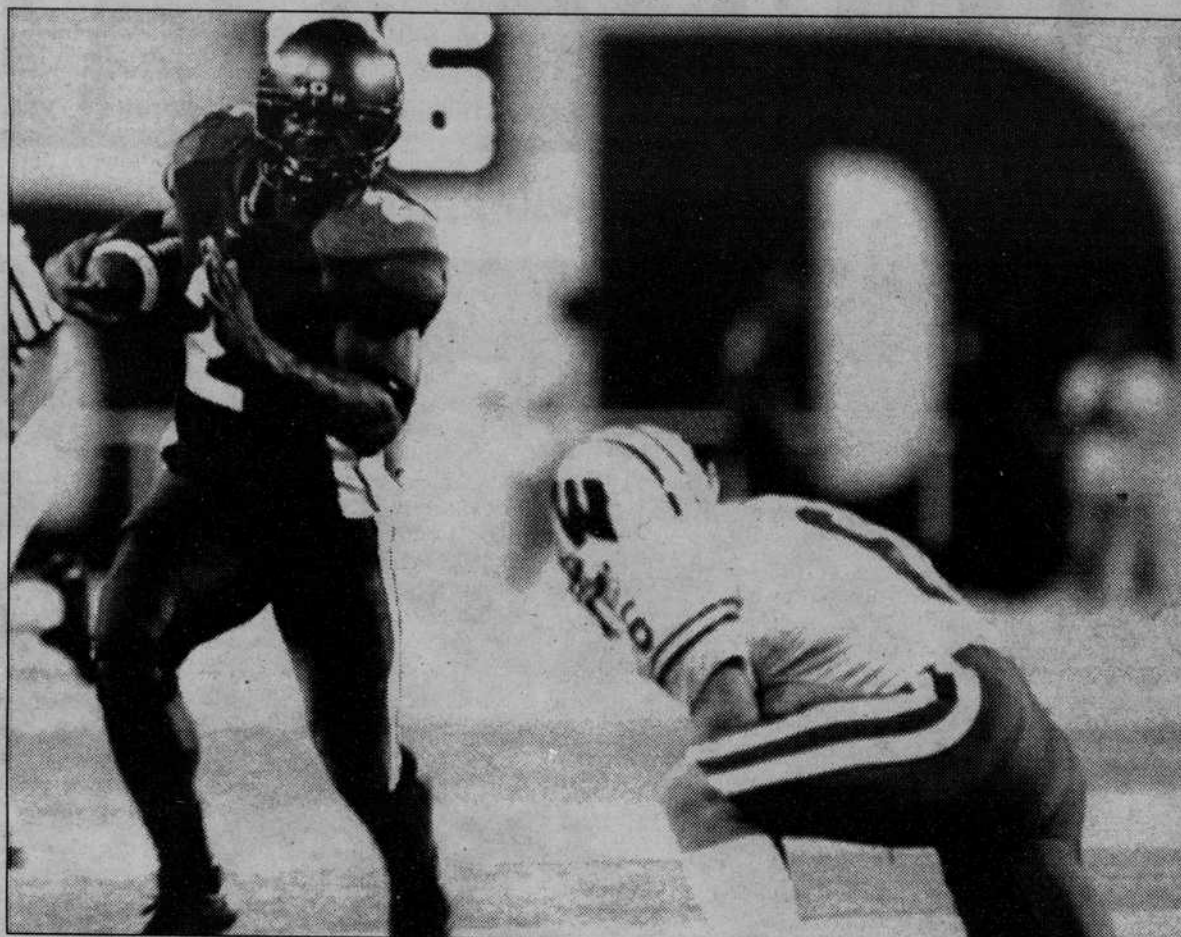
And besides Stanford? UCLA, Washington and Washington State, ranked ninth, 11th and 12th in the BCS, respectively, all have legitimate shots at the Pac-10 crown. The Bruins and Cougars were both undefeated until last weekend. The two teams face each other in Pullman this week, which will knock one of them from the equation.

Washington can't hang onto the edge forever, can they? Following Stanford, the Huskies travel to Oregon State, host the Cougs and then head to Miami, a team ranked No. 1 in both the coaches and media polls. Thus, the Huskies will likely fall flat.

What about Oregon, you ask? The Ducks' best — and easiest — hope of getting free Tostitos on New Year's Day is if Stanford loses one of its three remaining conference games. Assuming Mike Bellotti's team wins its three remaining games, including a battle with No. 9 UCLA, the Ducks would hold the edge.

Assuming Stanford doesn't fall, though, Oregon will have to go head-to-head, and the Cardinal, of course, holds

Turn to Jude, page 3B



With 285 yards rushing last week against Washington State, sophomore Onterio Smith set a school record, breaking Bobby Moore's (Ahmad Rashad) 249 yards in 1971. In eight games this season, Smith has rushed for 781 yards and seven touchdowns.

UO aims to start new streak

■ The Ducks return home and hope to treat their fans to an exciting offensive performance

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

On the road, Oregon has outscored its opponents this season 173-73.

In the friendly confines of Autzen Stadium, though, that mark is only 121-109.

The eighth-ranked Ducks are aware of this and want to treat their fans to a more enjoyable contest Saturday night when they host the Arizona State Sun Devils at 7:15 p.m.

It has been two weeks since a sold-out Homecoming crowd witnessed the end of Oregon's 23-game home winning streak. And while Stanford proved its worth in its 49-42 victory, Oregon tight end Justin Peelle admits that his team might have been a tad complacent.

Former Ducks bring Devils to Autzen

■ With two former Ducks' coaches on staff, Arizona State hopes to upset Oregon at Autzen Stadium

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Arizona State Sun Devils are coming off a heartbreaking loss to Washington in Seattle last week.

Now the Devils visit "one of the loudest stadiums in the country," head coach Dirk Koetter said, as 11-point underdogs.

In the 31-33 loss to No. 13 Washington, the Huskies needed a last-second kick from John Anderson for

"We were a little bit arrogant going into the Stanford game, like we felt like we couldn't be beat," Peelle said. "So we got humbled. But now after the win at Washington State, we've got our confidence back and are ready to give our fans a show."

"We felt that we let them down last time."

Speaking of a letdown, Oregon (7-1 overall, 4-1 Pacific-10 Conference) can't afford to have one against Arizona State (4-3, 1-3). With UCLA losing to Stanford and the Cougars falling to the Ducks on Saturday, five teams are neck-and-neck on top of the Pac-10 with one loss each.

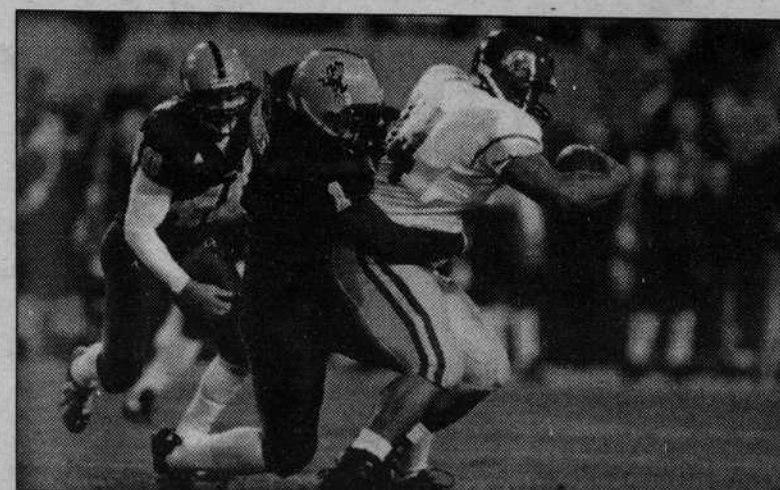
Oregon's 24-17 win at Washington State was impressive, but it won't mean anything if the home team can't take care of business Saturday night. Only three games remain on the schedule and each one requires the Ducks' full attention.

"We've talked a lot about focus, and our focus has to be very near-sighted, very short term," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said. "If you look too far forward or too far back, you get in trouble."

With the Ducks and Sun Devils meeting on the gridiron, though, it's hard not to look back at their last two meetings. In 1999, then-sophomore quarterback Joey Harrington led a dramatic last-minute scoring drive that ended with a 29-yard touchdown pass to Marshaun Tucker with nine seconds remaining to cap the 20-17 win.

And then last year's game was pure "Tempe-rary" insanity as Oregon and Arizona State produced the game of the year in the desert heat of Tempe, Ariz. With big plays aplenty, the two teams put forth an offensive performance that took two overtimes to complete.

Turn to Game preview, page 10B



Arizona State Media Services
Arizona State linebacker Solomon Bates (1) is averaging 4.7 tackles per game this season.

THE BOX

Key Number: 38.7

Points per game for the Arizona State offense. Ranked third in the Pac-10 in that category, the Sun Devils have scored 35 touchdowns this season in seven games. The Ducks have scored 36.8 points per game of their own.

Pac-10 Rankings

Total Offense

Oregon.....2
Arizona State.....3

Scoring Offense

Arizona State.....3
Oregon.....4

Passing Offense

Arizona State.....3
Oregon.....6

Rushing Offense

Oregon.....1
Arizona State.....4

Total Defense

Arizona State.....5
Oregon.....9

Scoring Defense

Oregon.....3
Arizona State.....7

Passing Defense

Arizona State.....6
Oregon.....9

Rushing Defense

Oregon.....3
Arizona State.....4

Quotable

"For Arizona State purposes, this is probably the only time all year that we will have weather issues. I think right now the forecast is for low 40s and 40 to 50 percent chance of rain."

Dirk Koetter

Arizona State head coach, when discussing the expected weather at Autzen Stadium

Key Player: Rashad Bauman, Oregon cornerback

After two weeks against much bigger receivers, Bauman will go up against 5-foot-9 Shaun McDonald, ASU's most talented receiver.