

# Washington State faces showdown in Columbus

Washington State and Ohio State meet in what should be an offensive spectacle

## Game of the week

Peter Hockaday  
Sports Editor

### No. 10 Washington State at No. 6 Ohio State 12:30 p.m., ABC

This game is so rosy, they might as well play it in a garden.

In what could easily be a preview of the Rose Bowl, the Pac-10 favorite meets the Big 10 favorite in the biggest game of the young season for both conferences. Yes, this game is bigger than Washington-Michigan, and fans can only hope the outcome is equally as exciting as that thriller.

But don't tell the Cougars this is a big game.

"You know I go by the old coach-speak words of 'one game at a time,'" Washington State head coach Mike Price told Seattle reporters. "It's just a different team in a different-colored jersey."

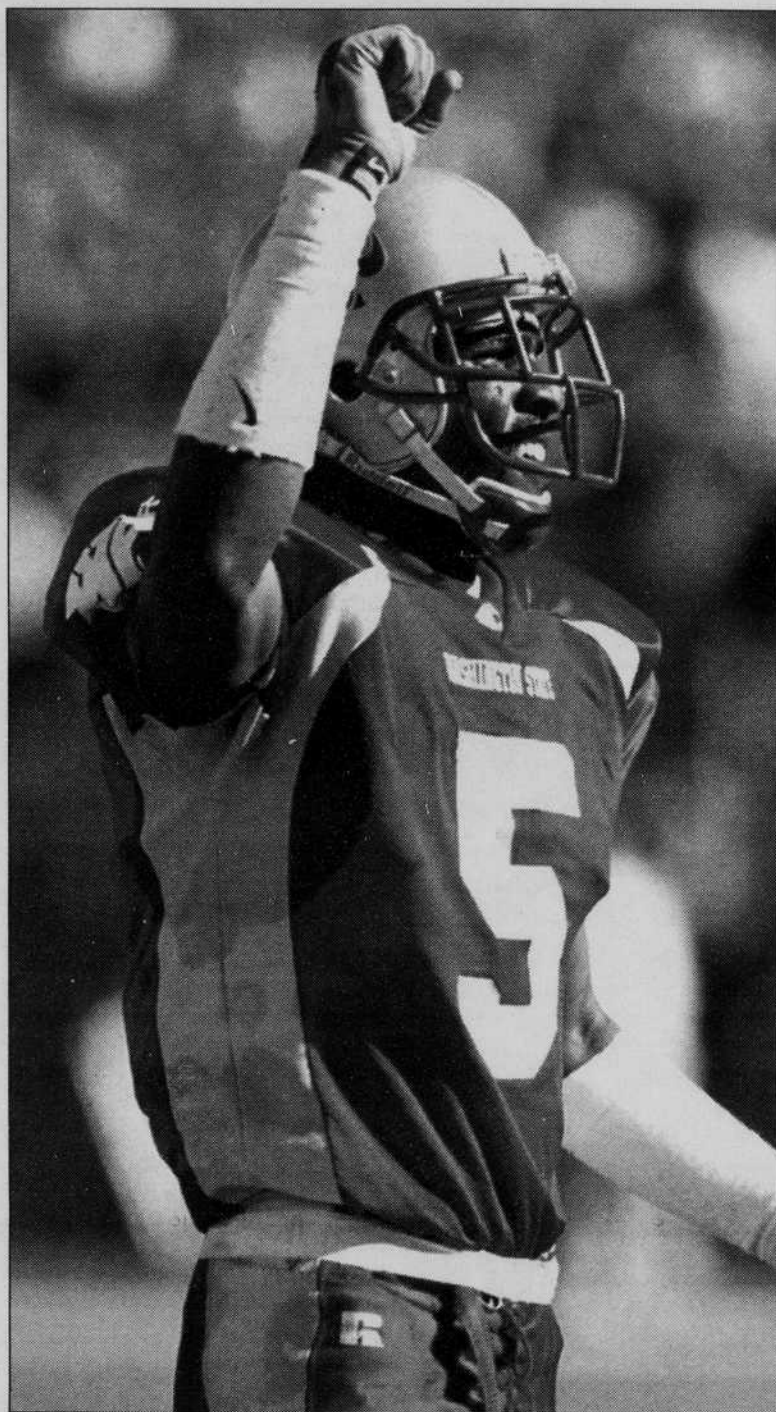
Actually, it may be hard to differentiate the teams on the field Saturday. Both sport crimson and silver as their team colors.

In the away uniforms, Washington State has already started to live up to the hype surrounding its 2002 campaign. The Cougs' defense, which gave up more than 22 points per game last season, has only given up 21 points in two games this season. The already high-powered offense may have gotten even more high-powered in the offseason, as evidenced by the 80 points the Cougars have scored in the two games.

In the home uniforms, Ohio State opened the season with an impressive 45-21 win over Texas Tech and a 51-17 stomping of Kent State, but the Buckeyes still have questions on defense. Ohio State allowed 358 yards of offense to Kent State.

"We're where we need to be for the second game of the year," Ohio State tackle Darrion Scott told the Dayton Daily News. "But we have some things to work on."

The Buckeyes don't need to work on their offense. The most pleasant surprise for Ohio State has been the emergence of true-freshman running back Maurice Clarett, who rushed for 175 yards and three touchdowns in the opener against Texas Tech. Senior quarterback Craig Krenzel, who has thrown for 308 yards this season, has stepped up to the challenge of being the starter, and along with Clarett gives



Courtesy Washington State Media Services

Washington State receiver Mike Bush leads the Cougars into Buckeye country for a test against the No. 6 Ohio State team. The contest is one of the top games nationally.

the Buckeyes a double-threat offense. Ohio State is the highest-ranked Big 10 team in the Associated Press poll, and in order to keep Michigan at bay, the Buckeyes need to take care of Washington State. After Saturday, Ohio State has a relatively weak schedule until an Oct. 19 matchup with Wisconsin.

The only thing going against Washington State, other than a tough Ohio State team, is history. The Buckeyes have won all seven times the teams have met, includ-

ing the last meeting in 1991. The quarterbacks in that game were Drew Bledsoe, then a Washington State star and now an NFL star with the Buffalo Bills, and Kirk Herbstreit, now a college football analyst with ESPN.

When the Buckeyes and Cougars meet again in Columbus, it will be for conference pride and national respect, and maybe for the roses.

Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailymerald.com.

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