

Pac-10 prognosticating still possible

No, you're not delusional. Your eyesight is OK.

California is atop the Pacific-10 Conference standings. Washington is last.

Crazy, but true.

Granted, it's only three weeks into the season, and the Huskies have only one loss, but that doesn't mean anyone — including Cal players — expected anything like this to happen.

Amazingly, six Pac-10 teams (Oregon, USC, Washington, Washington State, UCLA and

Cal) are ranked in the top-25 this week, the most since Sept. 18, 1989. Not to be forgotten, Oregon State is close behind at No. 28 in the Associated Press poll.

What does that mean? Nothing, really, since conference play hasn't even begun.

It does, however, promise another exciting Pac-10 race where no team can be taken for granted — especially Cal.

After a 1-10 finish last year, the Bears were picked to finish last in the conference this year. Under first-year head coach Jeff Tedford, the Bears have been golden. They pounded then-No. 15 Michigan State 46-22 last week to start their season 3-0 for the first time since 1996. They're ranked — no joke — No. 23 in the Associated Press poll.

Tedford, the former Oregon offen-

sive coordinator, is simply a miracle man. Let's hope he didn't sell his soul.

"What we're doing is a shock to me," cornerback James Bethea told the San Francisco Chronicle. "This is how you always dream of your college football career being — not to say that we'll win every game we play, but that we feel proud of playing for Cal, and we have a chance to win every time we go out there."

Quarterback Kyle Boller, who's admitted to constantly watching the film of Oregon's Fiesta Bowl victory, was named the Pac-10 Player of the Week after accounting for four touchdowns (two throwing, one rushing, one catching) against the Spartans.

After an ugly career, Boller may end on a positive note.

"My best stuff is yet to come, I think," Boller told the San Francisco

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Adam Jude
Out in left field

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Pac-10

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The Golden Bears have not started a season off this successfully since 1996, and are just three wins away from magical win No. 6 — the figure that automatically qualifies a team for postseason bowls. Of course, California is banned from bowling this season due to NCAA rules violations, but that doesn't mean the Bears can't have some fun along the way.

"The funny thing is, no one on the team was shocked that we won," California safety

Nnamdi Asomugha said. "We were very confident going into the Michigan State game that we could play with this team, and after half-time it was evident."

Montana State (2-1) at No. 16 Washington State (2-1) 2 p.m.

There's no better way for Washington State to get better than to take on I-AA opponent Montana State.

This game will probably be a cakewalk for the Cougars, especially considering they have defeated Montana State in each of the six previous games the two teams have squared off in, including a 53-28 blowout last season.

But after last week's loss to Ohio State, the Cougars know they have to get back on track.

"We know we have some work to do," defensive end Isaac Brown told the Daily Evergreen. "Ohio State showed us we had work to do. I think that was kind of a good thing for us, because we're not going to be too full of ourselves. We're not going to be on that high horse in the weeks to come."

Fresno State (1-2) at Oregon State (3-0) 3:30 p.m., Fox Sports Net

Hoping to avenge last season's 44-24 loss to the Cinderella squad from central California, the Beavers welcome Fresno State to Reser Stadium for a game that

could be very entertaining.

Derek Anderson has sprouted talent for Oregon State, throwing for 12 touchdowns, no interceptions and a 66 percent completion rate in three games. Against UNLV last week, he threw for five TDs and 356 yards.

Fresno State has nearly been the Cinderella team it was a season ago, but its luck may have run out. The Bulldogs have lost two games by a combined six points — by two to Wisconsin and four to Oregon. However, signal-caller Jeff Grady has not played in two straight, and for the Bulldogs to be successful, they need him behind center.

But with Oregon State's relative inexperience, this game should be close.

Wyoming (0-3) at No. 13 Washington (1-1) 7 p.m., Fox Sports Net

Washington should be able to handle the Cowboys without any problems. But the Huskies have had problems of their own this season and Wyoming, which is looking for its first win, could be a dangerous squad.

At least that's what Washington head coach Rick Neuheisel seems to think.

"Whenever you're playing a team that's on the ropes, you always worry about their devil-may-care strategy in a game that can just be wide open and cause you all sorts of fits if they're doing things that might not be the norm in a contest," he said. "The outcome of a game is a risk-reward deal, there looks to be very little risk for them right now in terms of what they can do and what they can try. So you get nervous about that."

The Huskies have not played since Sept. 7, when they notched a convincing win over San Jose State. However, their 31-29 loss to Michigan to open the season still seems to have its residue on the Washington program. For the Huskies to succeed this year, Neuheisel will have to get his players to forgive and forget.

Contact the sports reporter at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.



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