

High-flying conference powers air it out

Offenses fly as the Pac-10 heads into another week of conference play

Around the Pac-10

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

Three teams stand atop the Pacific-10 Conference, all undefeated in conference play and each with New Year's Day bowl aspirations.

As for the rest of the conference, it's hit and miss. USC, UCLA and Washington are in the middle of the pack, while conference surprise California is right behind. Arizona, Stanford and Oregon State have yet to come out on top in a Pac-10 matchup.

The Beavers will remain winless for one more week, as they have their only in-season bye of the year, and Washington State, one of three teams at the top, also won't play this week.

That leaves four conference

matches that are certain, as usual, to get the blood boiling.

Arizona (3-3, 0-2 Pac-10) at Stanford (1-4, 0-2) 2 p.m.

Despite each team's best efforts not to, one of these two squads will have to finish the Pac-10 season with a win.

Not that both teams haven't tried their hardest, but it has been a year of miscues and ineptitude for the Wildcats and Cardinal, although Arizona has shown some resiliency in past weeks.

The Wildcats, who sport the Pac-10's worst scoring offense yet have the conference's fourth-best scoring defense, hung with Washington until the very last seconds last

week, eventually falling to the Huskies, 32-28.

A week before that, they stayed with Oregon for the first half, but a sluggish offense kept them out of the game in the second half, and they succumbed to the Ducks, 31-14.

"We have played some really good football," Arizona head coach John Mackovic said. "The players should not feel the least bit discouraged about the quality of their play and what we've been able to do on the field. We laid it right on the line out there, and even though we were undermanned in terms of numbers on Saturday, we thought we'd win that game."

The bright spot for Arizona this season has been the play of quarter-

back Jason Johnson. The senior passed for 443 yards last week against the Huskies — his second offensive output of at least 400 yards this season — and is second in the Pac-10 in total offense with 293.3 yards per game.

As Johnson goes, so goes the Wildcats.

"Jason got a lot of one-on-ones with Bobby (Wade) and Andrae (Thurman) for most of the game, and when he gets those one-on-ones with Bobby and Andrae, he is going to deliver the ball to them," Mackovic said of Johnson's play against Washington.

Arizona holds a 12-7 lead in the all-time series against the Cardinal, Turn to **Pac-10**, page 12B

Washington, USC wage war in front of national audience

The Trojans and Huskies renew a rivalry that has intensified lately

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Game of the week No. 22 Washington (4-2, 1-1 Pacific-10 Conference) at No. 19 USC (4-2, 2-1) 12:30 p.m., ABC

After playing in five-straight games at Husky Stadium — after starting the year at Michigan — Washington finally hits the road for the first game

of its two-game road trip.

USC, on the other hand, stays in Southern California after a narrow defeat of California last week.

The Trojans and Huskies will butt heads in a nationally-televised game that is sure to get the attention of the East Coast voters.

USC leads the all-time series, 42-26-4, but the Huskies have won three of the last four games. Last season, Washington was victorious, as a 32-yard field goal with time expiring split the uprights, sending the Huskies to their 12th straight victory.

This season, though, has been an entirely different story for Washington and head coach Rick Neuheisel.

It has been a trying season for Neuheisel, who, in the first game of

the season against Michigan, played a part in a penalty that eventually gave the Wolverines a victory. Then, just last week, he was reprimanded by the NCAA for recruiting violations while he was head coach at Colorado.

He has never been that popular among Pac-10 teams. Now, he's dropping even lower.

"The bottom line is, you have days that are a lot of fun and days that are more of a challenge," Neuheisel said regarding the NCAA investigation. "The guys who are able to stay the course and do the job in a long-term capacity are the ones that can weather all of it. First you can't believe it when they are

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